



### **GREETINGS FROM VENEZUELA**

We are excited to see what God has been doing here in Venezuela despite the declining situation of the country. I don't think that there is a missions manual that explains how to church plant in a country facing what Venezuela is facing. I don't have an accurate count of how many people have fled the country. Some unofficial numbers are estimating upwards of 10 million. We just had another family leave yesterday. They were a young couple with two kids. They were going to Columbia and then on to Peru. Thankfully, many of the surrounding countries have opened their borders to Venezuelians and many have been able to start over in other neighboring countries. From a church growth standpoint it has been a challenge because although we are seeing new people come to church, we are also seeing a steady flow of people leaving the county as well.

### **SEEING GROWTH**

Despite the situation we are seeing God do a work in many lives we are currently hosting 4 discipleship groups in our home (1 discipleship group every week). This seems to be where the rubber meets the road with regards to Christian growth. We actually have different types of discipleship. We have a doctrinal base discipleship that is something that new believers take home and work on. This is accompanied by a new believe's class where we walk with the new believers through the basics of doctrine to provide them with a strong biblical foundation. Along with this discipleship we have an informal discipleship in our home after church on Sunday's. We cook a meal and have dedicated this time to dealing with the basics of the Christian life. There are no specific themes, instead it is an open opportunity for people to share what they have been learning throughout the week and an opportunity for us to help them make their relationship with Christ practical on an every day basis. We have truly seen growth through this style of discipleship. We also have personal discipleship for those who want to grow and be challenged. God has truly blessed in the realm of spiritual growth.

### **PERSONAL SECURITY AND STABILITY**

One of the things that has drastically deteriorated in the recent months has been the decline of personal security, and inability to find basic products. We went at least 2 months without being able to find any beef or chicken products. Finally, recently we were able to find a bulk provider to purchase from. I still have not seen very much chicken in the streets. This came as a result of an imposed price control. Anytime that happens, products disappear. Eggs have been scarce as well because the inflation has brought meat prices to a point that the average person cannot afford to purchase meat or chicken products. Eggs are expensive but currently the most economical source of protein.....if you can find them. We have also experienced more frequent power outages. Many cities have gone days if not weeks without power. Thankfully, normally for us it is only a few hours. Water is another situation as well. Many streets are overflown with raw sewage and often we can go without water for several days due to the poor conditions of the infrastructure. I share what I share, not to complain. We are excited about what God is doing. I share for you to know how to pray. If these things are impacting us, they are most certainly a burden for our church members and our community as a whole. There is not a day that goes by that we don't see at least 5 people eating from the trash in the streets. The other day I bought bread for 2 little boys in the streets at nearly 10 p.m. at night and simply had to hand them the bread with tears in my eyes because the situation broke my heart. Please pray for Venezuela!

### **EXCITED TO SEE MY CHILDREN SERVE**

One of the most exciting things for us has been seeing our children get the burden for the ministry. My two older boys have been going out and witnessing to the guard for our neighborhood. We have given him a Bible and a book by Henry Blackaby and he has been reading them both. Actually, today I want to go out and sit with him for a while to answer some questions that he has regarding his Bible reading. My boys faithfully go and share Christ with him and then return home for a recharge and advice from good old dad. One of the greatest burdens of a missionary is that their children will not have the same passion as do the parents, but I give thanks to God that I can truly see the Holy Spirit working in the lives of my boys and I am excited to see them grow in their faith. Jude and Ellie share Christ in their own little way. Jude came home the other day saying that his "caflick" friend wanted to get saved. I am proud to serve along side of my wife and children. Thanks again for your prayers!

#### **Please Prayerfully Remember:**

- Starting our visa work again.
- Our protection!!!!

*The Sykes*

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