



Bulb-flowers growing on my patio. Such a cheerful sight!

Sometimes, when I sit down to write my newsletters, I have a clear direction and theme. Many times, my pictures prompt a focus on what I write. Through each newsletter, I try to convey a little of what is going on here, and often something that God has been teaching me as well. As thoughts swirl around in my head, I will do my best to share with you a few highlights from the month of February.

1. He works in our weakness. Since the tragedy occurred (see my previous newsletter), we teachers have tried to be a help and support to the students and families, but we ourselves were grieving alongside them. Counselors were brought in to provide extra support for the students, but it may be a long road ahead still, for some who were particularly close with that student and their family. A couple weeks ago, I shared in a staff devotional from John 15, that "without Him, we can do nothing". He is the One that gives us wisdom, strength, peace, compassion, joy, love, gentleness, faith, and so much more. Our job is to abide in Him, and He works in our weakness. So as we get up and get ready to teach another day, or if we are getting ready to do any sort of ministry, we must remind ourselves of these things, surrender to Him, and may He receive the glory for working in and through "jars of clay." 2 Cor. 4:7 NIV "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

2. Growth is good, but usually it is uncomfortable. One way we try to foster a heart for serving the Lord and others at ECA is through "Flipped Service Days", which takes place a few times a year during the last 2 hours of the school day. We have a variety of activities the students participate in, from trash pick up in the community, to ministering at a nursing home, to cleaning out horse stables, to praying for various needs. This month, the elementary students participated in a "prayer walk scavenger hunt", where they had riddles/clues that led them around the small town of Camarma (where our school is), and those places would have a symbol card that corresponded to an envelope of prayer requests their teacher chaperone would have. After reading a Bible verse and the requests, the students took turns praying. My group was particularly shy (not many elementary kids want to pray aloud in a mixed group!) but soon we had a rhythm going, and it was encouraging to hear the prayers of the elementary kids (and also a couple of secondary students). I think their confidence in praying aloud grew throughout the activity, even if they were sometimes "uncomfortable" doing so.

3. God is drawing people to Himself, and I want to be a part of that process! We had a few days off of school called "Winter Break". Some high school students went on a missions trip to the Czech Republic, some teachers and families had their yearly missions conference, others took a vacation, but I decided to stay in the area and catch up on some things, including getting together with a couple of friends (not ECA teachers or church people). One friend in particular I had met from my July Spanish language class. I thought we were going to be doing activities together this whole school year, but I was usually too busy already to reach out and plan a meet-up. Despite this, I sent her a message, and we were able to get together for lunch on the Friday of my break. That meal was a four-hour-long conversation! We talked about a bunch of important topics, but one that lasted for over an hour was regarding religion and spirituality. I knew that the Lord could provide an opportunity for me to talk about my faith with her, but I didn't expect her to talk so much about her beliefs and "spiritual journey"! And the question that initiated the conversation- Do you celebrate any holidays? My friend Ami carries some emotional trauma from her upbringing (Catholicism), yet truly believes there is a "higher power" that created us. We discussed the Islamic faith a lot, and she shared many of her spiritual beliefs with me. Please pray with me for Ami, that she would see the truth about Jesus and Christianity through my friendship with her! And pray that I would be able to more regularly hang out with this sweet 21-year-old university student.

Praises:

- Time over winter break to catch up on tasks, get together with friends, and have spiritual conversations with non-believers.
- I'm trying to be more intentional to speak in Spanish with members of my church, and I'm thankful for their patience with me as I try to communicate.
- For how the Lord gives us strength for each day, new mercies, and the blessing of reading (and singing) His Word.

Prayer Requests:

- For my friends Cristina and Ami, to come to know the Lord.
- For good conversations at Brilla coffee shop with the English conversation classes.
- For a good adjustment as a new team member (Allie) comes to serve with ABWE here and will be my roommate. She flies in on March 5.
- For new teachers at ECA for next year...there are many needs, including someone who could come short-term to cover middle school English classes for a teacher that will be on maternity leave.
- For the girls in my discipleship group, who all went on the missions trip and made friends with some teens there (through practicing English). May the Lord use these girls (and others who went on the trip) to share gospel truths as they maintain these new friendships.