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Coming Up for Cocal.

- **NOV. 2**
Pork Chop lunch sale
- **NOV. 21**
Thanksgiving MLV
- **DEC. 2**
• Finals Day
- **DEC. 7**
End-Of-Semester Party



Graduate Erick Rivera
and son Justin



LIFE AFTER MLV - A testimony by Erick

It is often impossible to maintain contact with some students. In Honduras, people do not use email, and phone numbers frequently change. Some students show up for a brief time, many only a semester. Others stay a year or two, and a few graduate. Whatever the time, we try to sow into their lives what we can, but it is difficult to know the impact. Erick Rivera was a student years ago in the ministry and one who became more than a student, but a friend. After living close to him for years, we moved and he went into the military. Our contact with him was scarce, due to him not having a phone number. Recently, Erick called us and we have been reconnecting. Two weeks ago, his girlfriend, Giselle, had surgery on her gall bladder and we had the opportunity to help her with transportation home. I asked Erick if he would write something about his life after MLV and this is what he wrote:

When I studied in the ministry starting in 2012, I was in the welding class. German Moreno was my teacher. I believe I was a bit rebellious as a student in MLV. I remember fighting Brian about the uniform. I remember not wanting to complete my practice hours or doing just the minimum and Brian told me I had to stay an extra semester to finish the practice. I remember that I had to go to the bible studies and I didn't

like them. My first year in MLV, Brian and Rina were building their house in Agua Caliente, the village where I lived. I used to walk past them working in the construction and I never wanted to say hi because I was with my friends. I would pass by and ignore them.

After Brian and Rina finished the house, they moved to Agua Caliente. I continued studying in the ministry. At some point I visited them. The visits turned into dinner with them. Dinner with them turned into sleeping over and they eventually became my second family. Brian encouraged me to go back to formal school and graduate. With his support and help and encouragement, I returned to 8th grade and eventually graduated from 9th grade. It was all with their support.

I also graduated from the welding program in MLV after three years, because Brian pushed me. He wouldn't let me quit. He even let me finish my classes for free without paying the monthly fees. When I graduated, he gave me a welding mask, gloves, and other tools as a gift to get me started. I stored them, because I thought I would never weld again. I didn't want to weld. I just thought to finish my studies and look for something easier to do. I became a barber and cut men's hair and made a little money.

Brian and Rina eventually moved back to Puerto Cortes, and I decided to join the Navy. I went to

the Navy Base and signed up. I thought being a naval soldier would be an easy job. My cousin was a soldier and he told me he just sat around all day. I thought, they were going to pay me a full salary to be sitting somewhere guarding a door or gate. On top of that, they would give me a house, clothes, and food. Boy was I wrong. I would sum up my time in the Navy as an experience I never want to re-live nor do I wish for anyone else to live it.

I spent my first Christmas trapped in a camp and far from my family. They gave me an apple and five grapes for Christmas. Then I was sent to Olancho for basic training, which was brutal. The worst of it was a time when many of the soldiers with me started playing a Ouija board and other witchcraft games thinking it was all in fun. When suddenly, they began to go crazy and act like animals. They would see things, shadows and people that were not there. They spoke with voices that weren't their own voices. They ate mud and dirt as if it was food. They were possessed. One evening at dinner, a female soldier fell at the entrance to the mess hall with convulsions. When she stopped convulsing, she stood up and I saw her eyes like glass, distant and empty. She turned and literally attacked another soldier, biting her and

Life after MLV Cont...

grabbing her. She attacked anyone who wanted to enter the hall. Five men tried to restrain her and they couldn't. She overpowered all of them. Pastors came from all over to pray for them. The news came to cover the story. There was a pastor from Costa Rica who came and in a service with all of us, prayed for each of the 56 soldiers. He ordered the demons to leave them and the soldiers would fall to the ground sheiking that they didn't want to leave, or speaking in an altered voice begging the pastor to leave them alone. In the end, all of them were healed and in their right minds. With prayer, the pastor helped all of them. I was so scared. We all were. Many recruits climbed the security walls to escape. I thought about Brian and the ministry. I called him to tell him what was going on and he prayed for me. He gave me Psalms 91 to read. I read it over and over again. We all did. It was the worst month of

my life. When boot camp was finally over, and things returned to normal, they stationed me back in Puerto Cortes.

As a full soldier in Puerto Cortes, I had to wake at 4:45 a.m. every day to do exercise, then guard duty, then work whatever the captains wanted me to work at. I cleaned bathrooms, toilets, floors, painted walls, etc. Then when I was tired, I had guard duty again. It was anything but easy and I quickly became bored of the routine. Nothing changed. Every day was the same as the last. Even the mess hall menú never changed. Every Tuesday we had hotdog, beans, and cheese for dinner, every night, for two years! To me, my life had no purpose. In that time I met my girlfriend, Giselle, and we started dating. We had our son Justin, and because of them I stayed another year in the base. I wanted to provide for them. In the end, the Navy transferred me to another base and I spent two months separated from them. It was this separation that motivated me to finally quit the base and return to civilian life.

Without the Navy, I was jobless. I

returned to cutting grass and cleaning properties, the same work they do in my village that I had hoped to never do. I worked really hard for almost no pay. So, I started to look for a welding job. It was the only thing I had learned to do and I needed a change. A friend of mine recommended me to his boss who built roofs for a living. He decided to give me a try and I had a week to prove myself. If I passed I would have a job. I passed and now welding is the way I provide for my family. I work every day and I am paid well. Now I look back and appreciate my time and studies in MLV a lot. If it wasn't for the training they gave me, I wouldn't have a job right now. If one doesn't learn a trade in Honduras, there is no work. I am so thankful for the Ministry and for my decision to study there, because I am now seeing the fruit. I now use the tools Brian gave me years ago at graduation.

I believe that meeting Brian and Rina and studying in MLV were the best two things to ever happen to me in my whole life. They changed me. If it wasn't for MLV, I wouldn't have my work. I would still be sleeping until 11:00 in the morning in my father's house, doing nothing, working occasionally, going nowhere. Instead, I have goals and dreams and a future. I want to send my girlfriend back to school so she can study, and I want to start my own welding shop. If I hadn't met Brian and Rina and been adopted into their family, I would never have known how to treat my girlfriend right, or how to be a good father. Without their example, I would have copied other men in my life and treated others without respect, but they gave me a new example to follow. I am thankful for what they have done.

Erick Rivera – Graduate of Ministerio La Voz 2015

Agua Caliente –Update



Oscar, Merlin, and Genesis Bueso

Agua Caliente is celebrating the miracle of Genesis, Oscar and Merlin's baby. Genesis was born July 27. She was a normal birth, a beautiful 7 pound baby. Oscar and Merlin took her home from the medical center the following day, only to bring her back less than a week later in a fight for her life. Seven days after being born, Genesis was convulsing with high fevers. The doctors ran numerous tests, scans and a CAT and determined that baby Genesis had a severe infection in her brain.

Oscar works in a factory in Choloma and his medical insurance covered the cost of the clinic where Genesis was admitted. She

remained in the hospital in San Pedro Sula for 24 days. During this time, no one was permitted to stay with her. She was alone, isolated in the ICU. Merlin found a family member who lived in San Pedro and she stayed with her. She needed to stay close and pump herself and take the milk to the clinic so Genesis could eat. She was only allowed to visit Genesis for 15 minutes during the day. Oscar only saw Genesis on Sunday afternoons. Both were praying for a miracle. The church was praying for a miracle, and Cocal Gracias was praying.

At the darkest point, they feared

Genesis had died. She was not eating, nor was she responding to anything. They stuck her with needles to set a cannula and she didn't even flinch. Her limbs were floppy and lifeless. The doctors said if she survived, she would be a vegetable. Then, as if a switch turned on, Genesis started to eat. She started to respond, and her fevers broke! The doctors ran a CAT on her brain again and said the infection had disappeared completely! Even the doctors said it had to be a miracle.

Oscar, Merlin and Genesis were finally able to return home. But two days later Genesis started to

Agua Caliente-Update Cont...

cry again, abnormally. Fevers started again. Her feces changed color and Oscar and Merlin feared the worst, that she was getting sick again. They tried to calm her in the house and see if she would get better, but she was getting worse. She had a follow-up appointment at the medical center, but Oscar feared taking her and losing his daughter for another 24 days. Even still, he called Pastor Hector to see if he could come pick them up in Agua Caliente and taxi them to San Pedro Sula.

Before Hector arrived early in the morning, Oscar went to Pastor Juan's house. He was so tired, ragged, and beat. He needed hope. He expressed his worries to Pastor Juan and admitted that he did not know what to do. Juan responded, "Let's pray about it and ask God what we can do for her." By that time Pastor Hector arrived and the three of them sought God on what to do. As they were praying, Pastor Juan thought of Dona Nanda,

an old midwife who had delivered and cared for literally thousands of babies in the mountain over the years. He was convinced they should take the baby to her. The three then prayed about this course of action and asked God to give Nanda the wisdom that she needed to treat Genesis. Oscar asked them to visit Nanda with Merlin, because he had to go to work.

Pastor Hector drove Juan, Merlin and Genesis to Nanda's house. It was early morning still, but the old midwife was ready to see them. She brought them in and just by looking at Genesis, she diagnosed that her soft spot was caved in. She told them that it was a severe situation that provoked pain, fevers, convulsions, infections and even death! She would need to be treated immediately! Nanda took Genesis, grabbed her ankles and flipped her over. She then smacked the bottom of her feet. In a few minutes she handed Genesis back and proclaimed her healed. Her soft spot, which was caved before, was now round again and

gently beating. Genesis returned home and the fevers stopped. The convulsions stopped and Oscar and Merlin could finally breathe again. Their baby was saved!

Merlin gave this testimony in the Church when they presented Genesis. She reflected on the entire situation and came to the conclusion that the first time Genesis was sick, it did not occur to them to pray and ask God what to do. They instead ran straight to the clinic. They prayed for her like any mother or father, but they had their trust in the doctors. Not once did they ask God what He thought they should do. She realized asking God was the key. Had they asked God what to do, they may have seen Nanda much sooner and Genesis would have suffered less. She thanked God for his patience with them, his faithfulness, and their healthy baby. Continue to pray for Genesis because her infection is gone, but she now has microcefalia. We pray for her.

On the International Bible Day, Agua Caliente had a march to celebrate the day. The church in Agua Caliente joined three other churches, a church from El Rio, Fe en Accion, and the Nazarene church in Las flores. They walked in parade procession from the entrance to El Rio to Agua Caliente, carrying banners singing songs. A car played choruses and the brothers and sisters waved their banners. Over fifty banners were made for the occasion. When they arrived at the soccer field, they had a huge celebration with music and a guest speaker. Three people gave their lives to Jesus that day. Pastor Juan and the Agua Caliente Church are praying diligently every morning at 4:00 a.m. this month for the lost souls in the mountain.



Prison Time

Last month I received an invitation from the jail to join them for a celebration. It was "Typical Day" and the prisoners who study high school had prepared a presentation with visuals and food about the history of Honduras. Rina and I accepted and went to the program as guests. It was beautiful because many representatives from the city, the court, and another church had arrived to also support the activity. With all the school activities, we were in the jail for over an hour and able to see many of the brothers from the jail church. I got

to pray with several of them. We also saw my friend Iker, who when I first met him, had demons and was liberated. Rina was able to speak to him extensively and encourage him.

As we left and everyone was in good spirits, I asked the coordinator if we could return soon with the Ministry to visit and bring the prisoners food. The last time we took the ministry to the jail, they did not want us to bring food, nor did they want us to visit without licenses. But, God has always opened the

doors for us. The coordinator told me to pick a day to visit and to let her know. She said in two weeks was "The Day of the Prisoner" and we could visit then. When I suggested the visit to the service at the ministry, everyone was excited. We formed a plan to take them lunch and dessert! When the day came, everyone from the service came to MLV early and cooked chicken with rice, and baked half a dozen chocolate cakes, enough for 240 prisoners and police. Rina made 10 gallons of iced tea and punch. Never before have we gone

with so many things, all the food and our instruments. I was wondering if it was going to be possible to enter. The director himself came out to receive us and checked all the rice and cakes to make sure nothing was hidden inside. He checked the instruments and then let us though. When we got inside, the brothers from the church told us that once again they were not told of our coming and had not planned for it. We could not do service in the common area because we had not been scheduled and there was a soccer game going on. "Don't worry," I said. We can have ser-

Prison Time Cont...

vice anywhere.” The prisoners arranged the front room for us and we set up to worship. Mario played the guitar and the worship was amazing! If you have never worshipped with 80 prisoners, you should! Their voices were so strong that I could not even hear the guitar and I was next to it. We worshipped our whole set, and then the brothers took over and the choruses continued. I noticed that before I shared the message there were already people coming forward for prayer. Dona Mari, and Berta, and others were praying for prisoners behind Mario and me while we played. Mari hugged a young man and prayed for him as the Holy Spirit restored his soul. Blanca and Kimberly also prayed for people who experienced the Lord. After the message, we had another time of prayer and many were touched. Everyone in our group had a testimony to share. After the service, instead of leaving, we went to the kitchen where the ladies from MLV served each prisoner a plate of food and cake. The prisoners were so happy! Many said thank you. For sever-

al, the food reminded them of home. In the back of the kitchen a group of prisoners were like giddy boys, grabbing the tin foil that covered the cakes and licking the frosting! Every previous visit was limited to an hour. In the end, this trip was three hours! I think the police forgot we were inside.

Iker was not there this time. The brothers told me that he had been transferred to “El Poso”, a high security prison in Santa Barbara, literally that morning. I am not sure how to get in to see him there, so I ask for you all to pray for him and for a way to visit him in the future.



Mission Family News

Rina is in her third trimester and coming down the home stretch with Daniel, our fifth child counting Brayan and Heidy. Of her three pregnancies, this one started out easier than the rest, with no vomiting or morning sickness, but has proven to be the hardest in the end. She has felt more tired, and more uncomfortable than with the other two. She had her first sick day in 10 years at MLV a few weeks ago, when she pulled a muscle in her ribs and could barely move without causing a sharp pain. She was house ridden for three days. With all of this we are so excited! We saw our first 3-d ultrasound of him at our last doctor visit. Even in the womb he looks like Nathanael and has my signature head shape. He is going to be a great addition to the family. My

mom and dad will be coming down to meet him at the end of November. We hope they are here for his birth. It will be my dad's first trip to Honduras. Thank you again to the women's bible study and to Mission church who threw us a surprise baby shower and got us almost everything we needed. We really appreciate it. We also appreciate the knitted things friends in Honduras have given us. Dec. 2 is his due date. Anyone want to start guessing his birthday? It is almost here.



Baby Ruark

Needs and Opportunities

***VOLUNTEERS IN SAN DIEGO:** For the 2020 Benefit at SDFC Feb. 28 at 6:30 p.m. Contact Amy at Acaff44@gmail.com.

***COCAL PARTNERS :** Please visit www.cocalgracias.org/donate

For more needs visit: www.cocalgracias.org/help-us

Cocal GRACIAS



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Cocal Gracias is a non-profit organization organized in Maryland under the 501(c)3 chapter of the federal tax code, with Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Status. Our mission is to serve and meet needs in Honduras, sharing with the people the good news of Jesus Christ. We do this through our technical school, Ministerio La Voz, where we teach viable trades and skills in areas such as, English, Welding, Auto Mechanics, Sewing, and Computers. We don't want to just give fish, but teach men and women how to fish. The vision is one of transformation. With God's help, we will transform Puerto Cortes, winning it for the kingdom and to be a light on all of Honduras, Central America, and beyond. It is a big task, but we believe in a big God and we have seen his hand with us. Join with us in praying for the children, the youth, and all the leaders of tomorrow in Honduras, that they will grow in the knowledge of our Lord and in the knowledge of who they are in him and who they are meant to be.

