

January – February

The Irwins: Off the Beaten Path



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Due to COVID restrictions, we were not able to have our yearly overview retreat. We usually go on a week-long escape where we review all the ups and downs of the last year, as well as prepare and set ministry goals for the year to come. Even though we missed the experience, we did what we could by staying home, and started off with biscuits and gravy. That was a step in the right direction!



This was the last dinner we had with friends before Spain went back into a state of emergency and closed all municipal borders.

On the right, Noelia and I are in downtown Malaga during a festival with one of my good friends from high school, Dani.

January was filled with renewed COVID restrictions, meetings, and an abundance of earthquakes. There was a lot of uncertainty and fear among our family, friends and neighbors. We knew the writing was on the wall and that the government was going to once again place us under quarantine. With what little time we had left, we invited our closest friends to our home and decided to start the new year off with a bang. It had been too long since we were all together and without a doubt sharing that evening with people we deeply care for gave us a skip in our step. However, it was only two days later that we were pushed back into our respective towns and left with a limited amount of opportunities to see family and friends. Even though it sounds as if we are overrun by a tyrannical government, the reality of the situation was dire. Spain was worse off than last April and due to the holidays, it wasn't going to get any better. Noelia and I hadn't been paying much attention to how COVID was affecting Spain since after our wedding, and we were a bit surprised.

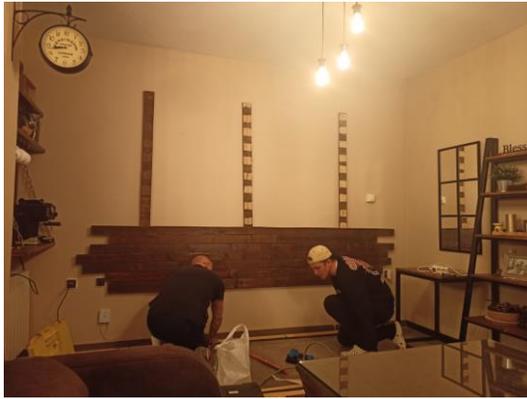
Thankfully we weren't alone during the entire confinement; our team was right with us! January has always been an essential part of the year for us and even with the restrictions, this year wasn't any different. We set a week of the month aside for a "planning retreat" with the objective to optimize our ministry for the coming year. We look at the previous year and evaluate what was good and what could have been better. We prepare for what is next, looking ahead to the future. It is also a time we come together as something more; a family all working towards the same goal. Our daily meetings started with a warm breakfast and even warmer coffee. One thing that we discussed in those

meetings revolved around the idea of becoming a Core Team. Towards the end of the month in December, one of our teammates was approached by other missionaries working in media about extending our reach on social media to a national level. For the past couple of years, we have primarily focused on Granada, limiting ourselves due to the impossibility of us personally reaching the entire country. Things have changed drastically, God has allowed us to create a web of connections throughout all of Spain that could represent Christ to people who happen to be seeking him no matter where they live in Spain. The objective with using media has always been to facilitate one on one meetings. We now have the opportunity to do so across the nation! God seems to be taking our very small vision for Granada and extending it to all of Spain. What a humbling opportunity. Please pray for us as we start to build on the foundation for what God seems to have planned all along.



A couple of months ago we mentioned that we filmed a Spanish national's testimony and planned on sharing it through our social media platforms. Well, we finished it and it's live! If you'd like to hear Agus' amazing story then click the image!

Looking back, February was a month of preparation. We just started the transition into becoming a "Core Team", and had a full plate of videos we had to edit for our media campaign that was set to begin the first part of March. It wasn't until halfway through that some variety began to spill into our routine. Restrictions were lifted! Well... some. Either way, Noelia and I couldn't have been more anxious! It's crazy what a month of being cooped up will do to you. Anyway, prayer walks and our other outreach programs were back on the menu. We had decided that in the beginning of the year we would be visiting Guevejar and Nivar; two small mountain towns that have absolutely no evangelical presence. For the rest of the month, we spent a couple of hours every week lifting the inhabitants in prayer and trying to reach out to anyone who would listen. We also took advantage of these new freedoms by inviting as many acquaintances to our home as possible. I cannot remember how many times I had to get snacks throughout the weeks, I feel as though half our budget was spent to feed hungry guests. Throughout those moments, there were many opportunities to witness, and God has opened so many doors in these relationships. Before getting married, it seemed that our closest friends would try their hardest to steer any conversations away from the spiritual and Noelia and I would do our hardest to open their eyes to the reality of Christ: a constant tug of war so to speak. Now there has been a major shift and God has given us so many opportunities that just a few months ago would have seemed impossible. Our union back in October left a huge imprint on so many of our relationships, and we can't help but feel as if God is ready to reap all the seeds that have been sown.



Another project!? Yes sir! We had all these pallets leftover from the wedding and it would have been a shame to throw them all away. So, we decided to take them all apart and build a wall of all the leftover wood! My father-in-law is a great help in all these creative endeavors that Noelia dreams up!



This year we started prayer walking in two towns; Guevejar and Nivar. These are small little mountains that have no Evangelical presence and few visitors. Absolutely stunning views and incredibly kind people.

What's Next?

- We've got another testimony in the works! Hopefully, we will be ready to share it in April.
- Preparing for our transition to the media outreach being nationally focused instead of regional. At the beginning of the year, we were approached by other media-focused ministries with an opportunity to expand our ministry efforts throughout the country.
- Training, Training, and Training! Last year, God blessed us with multiple opportunities to teach others about effective disciple-making and this year is

no different. We've already started more than three new trainings this year and from what we can tell there are many more to come.

- Continue raising funds! We've gained a couple of new supporters and although the finish line is still quite far, every step is closer to goal of being fully funded.

Prayer requests

- Our transition to the core team for media in Spain is going to be filled with multiple hurdles, especially since we aren't sure what is waiting for us on the other side. Although we are very experienced in media ministry, extending our responsibilities to the entire country is no easy task.
- For Noelia's family, a really close member of the family is struggling with his mental health and in the past couple of weeks hasn't been themselves. We ask that you lift him up in prayer and ask for healing and that he finds peace in the Lord.

Fundraising journey!

We find ourselves with a slight increase since last year. Approximately 50% of our monthly budget and over 100% of our startup fund. We are currently reaching out to churches and at the beginning of 2021 we will hopefully bring on some new supporters. We originally planned on flying back to the US towards the end of January to finish raising support, but due to COVID-19, it seems we will have to

reschedule for a later date. Even though we'd prefer to be in person, we will continue to push forward and reach out online. If you have thought about partnering with us, please reach out to me and I'd love to elaborate on how your partnership is helping the kingdom grow here in Spain.

Partner with us!

Contact Info

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To Give:

<https://teamexpansion.org/dirwin/>

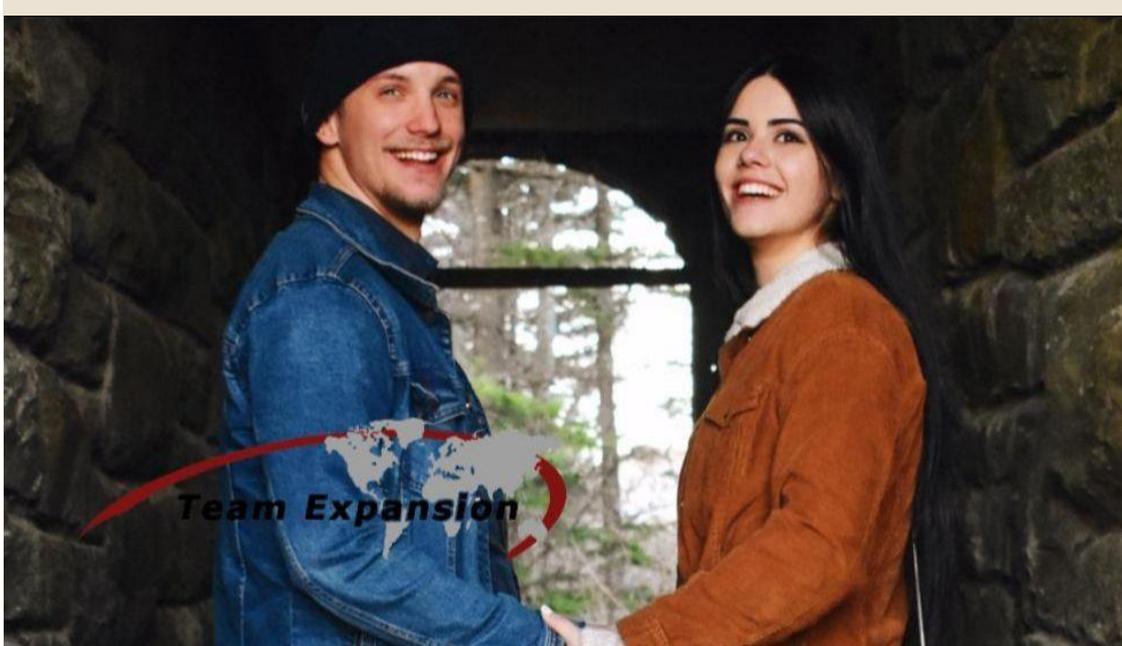
or send a check to: Account **# 1204**

Team Expansion

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Please include a note with the check indicating the gift is for our ministry. Do not write our names anywhere on the check.



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A Note From Our President

"Partnership" is a Beautiful Word

Several years ago, I became personal friends with the President of a sister missions agency (Pioneer Bible Translators). We invested time building a friendship that has lasted more than a decade. In the last few years, we have even begun forming joint venture teams together, with workers from one org complementing that of the other. This is not meant to imply that either org is somehow missing something, but rather that, as parts of the Body of Christ,

we were always meant to function together. It's a fulfillment of Christ's prayer in John 17. We are choosing to work as one so that the world might be won. In any sport, teams are stronger when they stand together, watching one another's back. Thank YOU for being part of the team. Thank YOU for watching the back of your favorite Team Expansion worker. Thanks for YOUR partnership!

Doug Lucas President of Team Expansion



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