

María Vélez

SERVING WITH WORLD REACH IN COLOMBIA



This is the last letter of the year! Time flies, doesn't it? Thank you for walking with me, for sustaining me in prayer, and for financially supporting the World Reach ministry. Thank you for being instruments in the hands of our great Redeemer.

I am happy to share with you my last experiences and thoughts of the year:

ONE COPY AT A TIME

"And so Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." They said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" Luke 22:8-9



Wait a minute, John and Peter in charge of the logistics? It seems so. I don't know if that meant cleaning the place, doing the shopping, but it sure meant making sure they had everything they needed.

During this year, and especially this last half of the year, the Lord has shown me the good work of logistics. Between downloading files, reviewing documents, creating publicity, making copies (many copies), and organizing coffee and snacks during classes, I have had the opportunity to embody Peter and John in this passage. I was the one preparing the room for others (and myself) to enjoy a great dinner with Jesus.

The MBI's project in Colombia this year, after the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a fantastic effort of my coworkers, has officially opened a MBI in Medellin. Also, 2 other locations are in the preliminary process. To see my coworkers teaching in the Spirit and to see an average of 30 people arriving at each location longing to learn more about God to serve Him better is exciting. But even more so is when I get to see the faces and the stories behind each one who receives a copy of the material. To see a copy being used as an instrument of God to instruct Natalia, a single mother whose spirit radiates light as her "loaves and fish" feed a whole class. Or to Sebastian and Angelica and Marlon and Carolina, two young couples who together desire to learn from the Lord to serve in their local church. Or to Pastor Alfonso who is in charge of a small church and whose desire is to offer nutritious food to those whom God has entrusted to him. All of this is rewarding.

Witnessing the chain of work and the final recipient of each copy or snack is satisfying. The best illustration I have found is being filled after seeing someone else enjoy their food. So this section of the letter is dedicated to all those who "arrange or prepare the place for the dinner". To those who are in charge of logistics, to those who organize chairs, or are behind a desk full of paperwork trying to keep everything in order so that the churches, organizations, and their projects can be used by God in such a way that gives glory to His Name. Your work is not in vain. We are His Body and every part is needed.

BACK TO THE BASICS... IN THE BALKANS

This year I had an incredible opportunity to visit a place where the name of Jesus is not as common as it is on this side of the world, and where people live under a totally different worldview. In October I traveled with other World Reach members to visit and learn from a family of coworkers who are in the Balkans. I once heard that our "souls" go at a different pace than our bodies (especially in an era like the present, where we run all the time) and I think that is true in this case. I experienced so much in such a short time that my soul is barely catching up with me. I am sure that the practical lessons learned there will continue to permeate many prayer letters in the future.

This experience was filled with coffee and Turkish tea, casual conversations, home visits, English classes, painting a house, game nights with university students, meetings, and prayer walks. All experiences that made the perfect setting to relearn what it means to believe and follow Jesus, to live faith in the every day, and to do ministry. It was an opportunity to remember how in need I am of God's grace every day and to rejoice in it (have you ever thought how blessed we are to know this truth? Blessed are the poor in spirit, says the Bible).

It was an opportunity to remind me (and now I remind you) that the gospel is an invitation to engage and connect with people. Greeting my neighbor, the cashier at the store, the hairdresser, or the person at the pharmacy and sharing life with them is extremely important. We, just as it was for Jesus, "have to go through Samaria" to have a "casual and daily" conversation so that maybe, just maybe, there will be a door in the future (near or far, only God knows) that will bring light to a life (or many) that is in darkness.





Getting to know the reality of the workers there reminded me of the parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-18) that Jesus once told. If we analyze the story carefully, we can come to think that the sower is somewhat "clumsy". How is it possible that he throws seeds on the road, on the rocks, or among the thorns? Doesn't he know that they will probably not grow there? Of course he does. So what does Jesus want to show us? The list of lessons is long, but one thing worth highlighting is the generosity of God.

The message (the seed) is for everyone, even if $\frac{3}{4}$ parts reject it. The workers there are investing their lives, their vitality, their time, their gifts, and talents to show to all kinds of soils (regardless of prognosis or outcome) the outrageous generosity of God's love and grace in the hope that it will fall at some point (and it will, as it has been before) on fertile ground. How long might it take - days, weeks, months, years? I do not know, but the seed is being scattered and in that we should rejoice. Let us rejoice! And let us not cease to pray for the unreached nations.

...the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I wish you a beautiful Christmas season and a blessed new year 2024.

In Christ,

María Vélez

If you would like to partner with a one-time gift or recurring monthly gifts to provide the support we must raise for the mission of World Reach to serve *in Colombia*, here is more information on how to do so:

To *donate online*, go to world-reach.org/donate to give once or set up a monthly gift via credit card. We also offer the option to give monthly via an **Electronic Funds Transfer** from your bank account. This is our preferred method because you will incur no third-party processing fee, and the transfer can be set up by going to world-reach.org/donate and clicking on "EFT Giving" at the top of the page.

To *give by check* made payable to World Reach, mail to the address below with a note indicating your preference for supporting "**María Velez ministry**".

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Taking Christ to the Nations