

From Tim & Annette ...

Months had passed since we'd been in Latin America, so our trip to Argentina and Chile was a welcome chance to get back in the saddle. We had been invited to lead some workshops at the National Youth Leaders Convention in Chile, but as we planned the trip we found that the ticket was cheaper with layovers in Argentina. These stops gave us the chance to meet with people who will play a significant role in the next phase of our ministry and to begin moving our belongings to Buenos Aires.

We were given a two-hour workshop - an honor since most are only one hour - but were having a tough time deciding on what to teach. My whole life I've heard stories from my father, a radiation oncologist, which highlight the importance of a proper, timely diagnosis. In that spirit, we decided to guide the leaders through an analysis of the plan and programs that make up their youth ministry so they could see where their strengths and weaknesses were and come up with ideas for improvement. One of the most gratifying moments of the seminar happened near the end as we were debriefing what the participants had learned from this analysis. A 50-something man who was sitting in the back explained that he ran an outreach to teenagers sponsored by the Catholic Church.

"I see now," he told the group, "that our ministry is strong in the area of service but weak in instruction."

A hand shot up in the front. When we called on the 20-something guy who had been typing away at his computer, we were a bit nervous that he might verbally attack the Catholic youth leader. (It's rare in Latin America for Catholics and Protestants to get along in ministry settings.) He began by saying, "Did you say you're Catholic? Because from what I've seen, you guys are good at including service as an integral part of youth ministry. Traditionally that's not something we Evangelicals know how to do. Could you give us some idea of how you include service as part of what you do with your youth group?"

The Catholic leader replied, "You guys are good at teaching and studying the Bible. That is something we need to learn from you." He then proceeded to describe a variety of ways they involve young people in service to the general community. Everyone listened intently and the laptop user recorded the ideas for future reference. It was a bright and happy moment of humility and mutual encouragement.

The trip also confirmed our decision to move back into Latin America, specifically South America. We love supporting youth leaders through teaching, giving them tools, and encouraging them. And we look forward to when the youth ministry institutes are up and running so we can offer the growing number of youth leaders in Latin America more than just a few hours of training a year.

Since late '94, we've mailed monthly letters out to over 400 friends and family who at some point said, "Sign me up." But 13 years later we have no clue if you actually want to keep receiving them. A few friends have admitted that they stopped reading our notes years ago; others have simply switched by subscribing to our blog, which is updated more frequently with shorter stories, up-to-the-minute prayer request and color photos. In an attempt to be good stewards of the resources we've been entrusted with, we've come up with the following three options:

1. If you want to stop receiving our letters, do nothing.
2. If you prefer to receive our updates via e-mail or online, simply subscribe at our blog (www.4loves.com/mexitext).
3. If you want to keep receiving the *paper version* of our monthly prayer letters let us know by postal mail, e-mail (below right) or phone (407-443-0116). Thank you for your help with this.

