



## ***The beautiful answer is preceded by a more beautiful question.***

– Joel Van Dyke, who works with gangs in Central America, citing e. e. cummings

Because of the momentum created as we simultaneously focus on daily urgencies and long-term plans, it is difficult to stop and ask, *Are we even on the right track?* In mid-February we spent two days in Miami with the Latin America area director for OC, Ricardo Escobar, to consider the first in a series of questions designed to help us align our activities with the Great Commission\* in light of the current world situation. We thought you might be interested in what emerged through the conversation.



### ***What is the unfinished task in Latin America?***

- **Making Disciples**

Although approximately 90 percent of the people throughout Latin America identify themselves as Christians, Jesus instructed His followers to “make disciples,” not to settle for lip service to a religion, even if it does use the name of Christ. The past decade of living in and traveling throughout Latin America has convinced us that although most of the people living there have been “baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” for the most part they have not been taught “to obey everything I have commanded you.” They think they will be saved because of what they do, whether it is by adhering to the rituals or the rules of their denomination, instead of through the person and work of Jesus Christ. And “salvation” is most frequently understood in the reductionistic sense of “going to heaven” instead of having an abundant life both now and in eternity characterized by restored relationships with God, others, oneself, and the creation.

- **Reaching Each New Generation**

On a continent where 60 percent of the population is 25 years old or younger, youth and children’s ministry, focused both inside and outside of local congregations, is a vital component of the unfinished task.

So are we on the right track? It seems to us that insofar as we enable followers of Christ throughout Latin America to be disciples who make disciples, especially of the younger generation, we’re not furthering our agenda, but His:

*\*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Next month: How we plan to continue doing this.

*Tim & Annette*

