

NEWS FROM UTAH

AIM 2011

February

Salt Lake City

Hello! I hope this newsletter finds you all doing well!

It has been two months since I last wrote a newsletter, I am excited to tell you what God has been doing in Salt Lake City. I am constantly surprised at how he works, you would think after 8 months on the field I would be used to seeing him work, that is not the case.

Since Bekah and I were both single for Valentine's Day, we decided to do something with the teen girls. We all dressed up really nice and went out to get dessert and then came back to our apartment to do an activity. We took turns writing good qualities about each other. The night went very well and helped the girls feel more comfortable with us before we left for the youth rally the following day.

At the end of January, God did something huge with the teenagers at the church we work with and with teenagers from other churches of Christ's. We met about four other

churches in Boise, Idaho for a youth rally. There were over one hundred teenagers in all. The topic was "Life or Death", youth ministers from the different churches each taught a lesson. From "Everything costs; sin demands death" to "What is death?" to "How to talk to your friends about the Bible". I was very surprised to see teenagers paying close attention and even asking their youth ministers to study with them then and there. I had the privilege of having a conversation with one girl who wanted so badly to get baptized, but was afraid of changing her life afterwards. Throughout the weekend, I saw God work on her heart until she was baptized. I am grateful to have met younger people looking for God and to have seen some accept him.

We have an exchange student from Leon, Mexico that stays with one of the elders. During the youth rally, he was not clear on what baptism is and if he is saved (he was raised Catholic). My coordinator and I are studying with him. He does not know much about the Bible but is very interested in what he does learn each week.

What I've been up to lately...

My English classes with Soma are going very well. She took a practice test a few weeks ago of her citizenship test. She did fantastic! Now, she is signed up to take her test in about 5 months. We are developing a deeper relationship, sometimes we talk about God. Well, she talks about Allah, but as soon as I start talking about God, she tunes out. I still leave her house after each lesson with something to bring home. Our last lesson, she had bought me a box of girl scout cookies. Please continue to pray for our relationship.

The second month that I was in Utah, I met a beggar named Aaron Butch. Aaron was a soldier in Vietnam, he did something to his legs to where its hard for him to walk, so he uses a wheelchair. Every day, he wheels himself to the same place with his cardboard sign waiting for someone to give him money. From talking to him, I found out that he believes that there is a God, but doesn't want anything to do with him. Please keep him in your prayers. I see him about 3 times a week.

Starting March 3rd, Bekah and I will be teaching Sunday class for the teen girls. We will be teaching on "Your identity in Christ". Though we are nervous about teaching, we are also excited. We will be taking turns teaching for the next 8 weeks. There are not many girls, 5 at the most, we are praying to get closer to them through our classes.

Since the beginning of February, I have been helping teach a cooking class for kids. We usually have about 10-12 kids who come. The majority of the kids do not attend our church. There's something about cooking that brings people in ;)

I am continuing to visit the women at the detox center (VOA: Volunteers of America). Last September I had met an older woman and had the opportunity to visit with her and hear some of her story. The Detox Center is for women who are trying to get clean from drug usage, they are usually living on the streets or have been ordered by the jail they are in to come to the center. This lady had just come from jail. The center lets women stay for 2-3 months and then the women can go to a homeless shelter. You can get kicked out of the center if you do not follow the set rules. The next week, this lady (Linda) was not at the center. Three months later, she was back in the center. She had been in jail for those 3 months. Her first week back, she came up to me and gave me a big hug, I was impressed that she remembered me. After many hugs and 'I'm glad to see you again', we talked like we were old friends. Please pray for her, she is a 50 something year old woman trying to get her life back on track.

What God has been teaching/showing me....

Over the past two months, God has been continually showing me that nothing is an accident, the things I do and the people I meet each day is all for a purpose. I take the bus twice a week and usually see the same people each week. There is a reason God brings along the same people each week. My coordinator said that this is a friendship ministry kind of place, meaning that you have to become a friend to someone before teaching God. It is best and more effective to become their friend and let them see the difference in you. Though it takes a while for people to notice you are different from other religious people, its worth it. For the longest time, Soma thought that I was Mormon, even though I said I was not. Many conversations later, she finally understood that I was not Mormon.

Along with taking the bus twice a week to my English lessons with Soma, I also take the train. The trains come in 15 or 20 minute intervals, so its always guaranteed a short wait. A lot of people take the train or bus. It is amazing how much you can learn about someone by simply asking "How are you today?"

A lot of the times I am out and about, it is common for someone to either start speaking Spanish to me or ask me if I am Mexican. Not only is this situation humorous, it makes for a great conversation starter, especially if the other person is not from America.

It still bothers me very much to see that the majority of the city really underestimates who God is. He is made out to be this very happy God whose job is to make sure you are happy because he was once a man himself. I do not know what to do or what to say when I hear these things about God. Even going to the Bible, they refuse to see who God really is. I find myself continuously going back to the books of Jeremiah, James and Acts. Jeremiah

because he preached many years and no one listened, Acts because it shows the history of the church, and James because it is encouraging. I know God sees the hearts of the people here and still has love for them, I struggle with loving them when they are following the wrong god. Throughout this all, God is teaching me to be patient and to not give up on people so easily.

Prayers and thanks...

I know my teammates and I are being prayed for, and I thank you for that. I ask that you continue to pray for us individually and as a team. Pray also for the new AIMers that will be coming here in May.

As many of you know, my sister Maria had a birthday a few days ago. March first to be exact, she is now 21 years old. Please keep her and the work she is doing in Africa in your prayers.

I'm sure I talked about this in a past newsletter, but my biological mother is sick with thyroid and heart problems. My family in Romania is very poor and struggles with having enough food to eat each day, my mother works very hard to care for her children. Because her health is poor, I am planning on going to see her in Romania for two weeks in May. Please keep her and the rest of my family in Romania in your prayers. Her name is Lydia. And please pray that I can save up enough money to buy an airplane ticket. Though I am very nervous about going to see my family again, I see an opportunity from God.

If you have any questions about the work here or would like to know more about my ministries here, you can reach me at my email betakatkus@live.com or my number at (907)841-0078 or even mail me a letter. My address is:

5584 Creekwood Lane
Apt. 7x
Murray, Utah 84107

Thank you all for your prayers and support! God is definitely working in Salt Lake City.

God continue to bless you all!

Beta Katkus