



## James Update February 2019

*"Thank you for praying for us. Please pray that God may open to us a door for the Word, to declare and make clear the mystery of Christ ... which is how we ought to speak" (Col 4:3,4).*

### Trip Report – Spain and Portugal – what God did.

Thank you for praying. Prayer is so important, as Jerry Bridges so poignantly states: "Prayer is the tangible expression of our dependence. We may assent to the fact that we are dependent on Christ, but if our prayer life is meager or perfunctory, we thereby deny it. We are in effect saying we can handle most of our spiritual life with our own self-discipline and our perceived innate goodness. Or perhaps we are saying we are not even committed to the pursuit of holiness." (Discipline of Grace, p140)

I'd like to tell you **what GOD did** this month in Spain and Portugal in response to your prayers. We spent ten days meeting with pastors and church leaders in 8 cities. We learned much about the situation there: few believers and some division among Evangelical groups. We met with great interest in starting Equipping Servants groups in several of the cities. At present 20 church/ministry leaders are signed up to participate in the ESI Facilitators Training in Valencia, Spain April 19-20. Pray for these men and women as they prepare the Bible Studies and reading for this Facilitators Training.

Photos of meetings with pastors in Spain and Portugal in February 2019



### **Our Purpose**

*is to honor Christ by strengthening the church to be true to the Bible, discipling believers to take the gospel where it is least known.*

### **Pray for:**

- The 10 new ESI groups that will start soon in Venezuela.
- For ESI Facilitator Training weekends in Chile in March; Valencia, Spain in April; Ciudad del Este, Paraguay in April; Santa Catalina, Brazil in April; Paysandu, Uruguay in June
- Debbie's work of evangelism & discipleship with women in the ILC Church in La Paz.
- 1500 active Equipping Servants participants in 8 Spanish speaking countries; and 2200 ESI graduates since 2002 - to grow in their love for Jesus and commitment to disciple believers and make Christ known!
- God's supply for 2000 tablets needed thru 2022 to load Pastor-Book-Sets in order to start Equipping Servants in 5 new Spanish speaking countries.

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People sometimes ask if we could explain what is ESI? ESI is mutual discipleship. We believe that the essence of the Christian life is a relationship with Jesus that grows as we abide in God's Word. Jesus said that if we are truly His disciples, we will abide in His Word; then we will know the Truth, and the Truth will set us free (John 8:31,32). It is our deep desire to honor Christ and walk with Him by being true to His Scriptures in the way we think and live and serve. That is why every believer needs to be reading and listening to and studying the Bible to know what God says. But it is not enough to simply know information. The point of the Bible is living; it is trusting in Christ to walk with Him in a gospel centered way.

So we look not to methods but to the Word of God. Nonetheless, the weakness of Bible study based discipleship movements like ESI is that it can lead to pride ("I know more than you"). When people learn information but don't live it, this is a sin that actually works against Christ and His Gospel. God has given us His Word to lead us to Christ for His transforming work in us! That's why information without transformation is anti-Gospel; it produces hypocrites and Pharisees. True transformation happens as we trust Christ to lead us and transform us.

This transforming work is something God designed for us to do in community and not alone! So ESI's mutual discipleship is built around our need to experience the transforming power of the cross to become like Christ and grow in our usefulness to X. Hebrews 10:24,25 exhorts us to help one another. In order to experience this, we need to stop walking alone and commit ourselves to walk together with other believers in Biblical friendship. We need to have relationships with other believers that are centered in the gospel. The Holy Spirit uses this to help us grow in Christ, so that we can:

- grow in our daily commitment to trust in Him/ to rely on Him
- grow in our commitment to transformation into Christ-likeness
- grow in Biblical humility and a lifestyle of continual repentance
- grow in seeking Christ and to live by His priorities
- grow in our hunger for God and our willingness to root out the idols in our heart so that Christ becomes our complete satisfaction.

Mutual discipleship helps us to grow in Christ. We ask you to pray for real transformation in the life of every ESI participant. May God bless you, and thank you for participating in this gospel work!

Overwhelmed seeing what God is doing,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kep & Debbie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kep and Debbie