



My Bible study group recently began this study titled *Joy: A Study of Philippians*. What a blessing it is to study the Word together and seek JOY each day!



September brought about another Bible lettering challenge that I gladly participated in with friends and colleagues around LAC. This piece from Psalm 31:15 reads, "My times are in your hands."



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](http://lcms.org/service).

## A Year Worth Celebrating

I've spent some time over the past few months learning about Paul and his ministry. Though I still have plenty to read and learn, I've come to truly admire this servant-hearted man more than I had before. Paul was a man who went through many trials in his life, yet he faithfully served his Savior despite the challenges. He wholeheartedly shared the beautiful, messy story of Jesus and taught others about the magnitude of God's love for all human beings. Paul seemingly felt unequipped for the tasks God set before him, yet God used him in powerful ways anyway.

This is how mission life feels. I am not convinced anyone ever feels truly equipped to be a missionary. I sure didn't (and still don't). Two years ago, as I began the application process, I remember thinking that I was a little irrational for even pondering the idea. My friends, family and pastor reassured me, though, that of course God can use unequipped, inexperienced people like myself in a place other than my home to share the love of Jesus (shocking, I know!). A short time later, I was again overwhelmed as I began visiting pastors, congregations, and friends stateside and sharing with them what I *thought* were my plans once I arrived in Latin America. Yet God was faithful and allowed me to speak wisely and raise up what feels like an army of supporters and prayer warriors across many corners of the globe. Then, a year ago, God sent me to the Dominican Republic. I arrived in Santiago terrified, yet confident that *something good* would come from my time here. And then, seven months ago? A pandemic. What a ride it has been so far.

How to reach me:

Email: [courtney.zalmanoff@lcms.org](mailto:courtney.zalmanoff@lcms.org)  
WhatsApp: +1-314-541-1142

Join my Facebook group where I share more frequent updates:  
Courtney in Latin America



In September, I celebrated one full year of living in the Dominican Republic, serving the people of Latin America, and doing it in the name of Jesus. I won't lie; it hasn't been easy. That pandemic I just mentioned? It royally threw a wrench in my plans and robbed me of some joys in life I *thought* I would be experiencing this year. Some days it feels as if "I am in chains for Christ" like Paul says in Philippians 1:13, though I am not in physical chains like he was. My responsibilities have changed, and life looks a little different than it used to, yet God is still using me as part of a mission team to serve Him and share His story with people around the world. Most days I am even more lost than Paul was in his ministry. Yet I am constantly reminded that "God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). He called me here for a purpose and will work good out of the love I have for Christ and those I share that love with. No matter what, there is joy in the hope we have for Jesus. There is no greater purpose in life than to live and love like Jesus did!

At first, Paul did not think God would use him to advance the Gospel, yet He did. I did not think I would be a missionary, yet I am. Paul was unsure whether he would live or die, yet he rejoiced anyway. I am unsure what the future of my ministry looks like, yet I joyfully serve and celebrate the eternal life I have in Jesus' death and resurrection anyway. Paul experienced the ultimate humility, hardship and sacrifice for Jesus, yet his words in Philippians overflow with joy and praise for our King. I feel unequipped, unqualified, and undeserving of the blessings I have, yet God "gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29).

Amidst his suffering, Paul reminds us what Jesus said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul then joyfully responds by saying, "[t]herefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Let us lean into Jesus in our weakness, rejoice in His abundant mercy and grace, and sing praises to Him no matter what our earthly circumstances may be.

Thank you, yes YOU, for accompanying me on this journey thus far. I pray you will rejoice with me in the many blessings the past year has brought and continue to lift up all missionaries and church workers in their vocations to share the love of Christ among the lost. I appreciate each and every one of you more than you know. Sending *abrazos* (hugs) from the Dominican Republic to wherever you may be, my friend! Jesus is with you!

### Verse of the month!

"No hagan nada por contienda o por vanagloria. Al contrario, háganlo con humildad y considerando cada uno a los demás como superiores a sí mismo."

Filipenses (Philippians) 2:3

### Prayer Requests

- Thanksgiving for one year of life in the DR!
- Safe travels and smooth transitions for missionaries leaving the field and those arriving to new places of service.
- That our church members would feel comfortable coming to worship to receive God's gifts.
- For answers to health concerns among missionaries.

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