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Texas Week 5

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Felis Navidad Minha Familia! (We listend to that song a lot in the car while driving to appointments to Spanish)
12-16-2010

Well, its almost Christmas and I'll be able to call you guys! This past week has been good in some ways and bad in others... We'll start off with the bad I guess, well things I am not that happy about. I got transferred from Midland 4th Spanish Branch. Elder White was also made a Zone Leader in Roswell NM and I got moved to Midland 3rd Ward. We are on bikes, and I'm in a trio with Elder Thode, Elder Yorgason, and myself. I am just really bumbed because now we're confined to one section of the town in Midland, whereas when I was in the Spanish Branch, all the spanish speakers in the town attended that ward. We still meet at the same building but I don't get to teach the people that I taught and I don't get to hang out with my old companions as much. We are in the same district and on P-Days we play football and spend time with all the missionaries in Midland TX, but it just sucks because I really liked being in the Spanish Branch but oh well... In several ways it is harder because I am literally going to the same building for church and stuff and I'll be seeing the members of the Branch but I won't be able to teach with them or go to dinner appointments with them and what not. Hopefully I'll go on splits often enough that I can see how everyone is doing, it is just really sad. That is probably going to be one of the hardest things about missionarywork that I'll have to go through. I just wish I could be in Midland 4th still. I wasn't expecting to get transfered, I found out on Monday.

As for the good news, this past weekend we had 2 baptisms out of the blue. Martin Flores, and Jesus Ramirez, (the guy who dropped us 2 weeks ago) Its a pretty awesome story! I'll start from the beginning when we started to teach Jesus.

He called us one day from a street contact that another Elder in Midland made at a McDonalds. He asked us to come by and teach him and so we did. I can't remember if we taught at his house the first few times but he attended Church and then went to the Thanksgiving party as well. After he gained our trust we went and taught at his house and we understood why he didn't like having company or wasn't sure. His house was pretty bare. He had a T.V. sitting on the floor, a bike, 2 lawn chairs and a dvd player.

His house was probably a 2 room apartment, the main room/kitchen, and then the bedroom with a bathroom there. We taught him a couple of times, he only speaks spanish so really Elder White and Elder Simmons taught him but then Thanksgiving day he called us and said he didn't want to hear anymore. He said that he was going to get a new job and that he wouldn't have time and that he didn't want us stopping by for lessons.

The next day we stopped by just to see how he was doing and kind of give him a "drop" lesson where we tell him we'll stop coming by. We just told him to pray and continue reading and went on our way. That day we had 2 baptisms cancel on us and it sucked, wasn't too good for our morale.

Well fast-forwarding 2 weeks into the future, last P-day Jesus calls us and asks us to come over and teach some more. We went over to his house and he said he was reading in the pamphlets we left him on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and so we taught him that again. After the lesson he asked us "When is the soonest that I can be baptized" This caught us even more by surprise. For one he called us back after dropping us, and then he asked when he could be baptized. We prepared him to be baptized the following Sunday, he needed to be at church at least 2 times before he could be baptized, (that is President Robison's minimum) and that Sunday would be the 2nd time. We taught him the restoration of the Gospel the next day and showed him the Restoration movie which he really enjoyed.

Immediately his life started to improve from where it was before he picked back up us teaching him. He didn't end up getting that job that he was applying for and he lost his job at McDonalds but he was able to get food from the Bishop's Storehouse and we also gave him some donuts (donuts are really big here in Midland, big as in popularity, not unusually sized pastries)

The Sunday he got baptized was also the same day Martin got baptized, the water was freezing but he still went through with it and because it was right after church the whole branch was pretty much there in attendance and they all introduced themselves to him and he immediately got fellowshipped into the branch. He is also wanting to learn English and so he is going to be going to both the 3rd Ward and the Branch afterwards to help with his English so I'll be able to see him. We are also going to see him getting confirmed this Sunday which is exciting.

It was very strange, he had a complete change of heart but he looks so happy and he opened up so much to us. He jokes around with us now and he just seems like a different person, a more happy person.

I got to set up Christmas lights for this one investigator's mom yesterday. We were setting up Icicle lights, it was fun and reminded me of me doing it at home. This whole season has had mixed effects too being a missionary. There is a phrase used in the mission "Trunky" where you are always thinking of home and having a hard time

focusing on the work. The closer it gets to Christmas the more strong the feeling gets, its annoying. I miss you guys a lot and wish I could be with you for Christmas, but that'll be in 2 years and that will be awesome! I don't mean to be trunky, but it is kind of unavoidable.

I also am afraid of getting back and being different and not being able to hang out with a lot of friends that I had before mission like Andrew, Geoff, Mike, Sam, Jesse, Weston and others. How is Weston doing? Has he said anything about getting mail from me? I sent him 2 letters since going on a mission. I also haven't heard from Andrew since getting in Texas. How are the Wilsons doing? The emails with Geoff have been working well and I just print them out and reply to them. I wonder if I'll be able to just reply with email in Brasil since postage is ridiculous. I'll find out when I get there though. Do you know if Andrew is working on anything for Missionary paperwork?

I did get the packages that you sent and its been great to have those! I love getting mail, hearing from home is always nice. We're doing the 12 days of Christmas for these investigators that we have that just had a baby a month and a half early. They're a really cool and chill family. We don't have that many investigators here in Midland 3rd, but we'll rebuild the pool and then Elder Yorgason and I will get our visas right when things get moving... That seems to be how it happens. Elder Yorgason just got things moving in Odessa where he was serving earlier and then got transfered here.

So Geoff directed the Christmas Pageant this year? I heard it was in Greeley Park on the side nearest to the church.

I also forgot about the creepy santa that was on the way to Rachel's school. There are some very different things here in Texas than NH. Most of the houses here have alleyways behind their house where they get into the garage of their house and where the trash is picked up so the street looks nicer I guess. All the trees here are foreign from Texas, and the weather has still been very warm. Yesterday it was about 75 degrees. The sunsets here are awesome and the sky is gigantic! Supposed to get colder here, around the 40's but I'm not sure it seems to be cold for a day then warm for a couple of days in a row.

We're going to go to some members on Christmas and I get to call home on Christmas too for an hour which I am excited for, and it has been really fun opening the packages you sent me.

My new address is:

1501 North Garfield St
Midland, TX 79701

I'll get the mail eventually from the Andrew's Hwy one when I see Elder Simmons and

Elder Urry on P-day and District Meetings but this is where I'll be for the next transfer at least.

Right now though we aren't even staying there for probably a week. Our plumbing at our place and the member's that we are staying with has gone dead so we're staying at 2nd Ward Elder's place which is also at a members house and it is a gigantic place. The members they are staying with are also members of the mission presidency.

We have a couple of Christmas parties which are going to happen this weekend and 2 baptisms in the 2nd ward.

To answer your question about having a Temple nearby mom, the closest temple we have is Lubbock which is about 2 hours away so I'll probably not be able to go to the Temple on my mission because Teresina doesn't have one either. Also that is really strange that Kevin got his mission switched, but that is still cool that he is going to Brasil. I had never heard of that mission though. Hopefully the visa trouble goes away by then as well. When does he go to the MTC? Maybe I'll be in Brasil by then.

Yes dad about the email updates that is fine and with the different editing out stuff that other people don't need to know, also are you just updating facebook every once in a while or are you posting the weekly updates on that as well? I dunno, just a thought, but you know what thought did... ;)

I'm sad that I missed Santa Fund concert. Didn't they start doing 2 shows for that my senior year? I remember that being good so we could improve for the last one. Gosh I miss South's Music Program and musicals and stuff. That's great though that it went well. Julia did you like that? Did it get really busy as it got closer to the concert? I know that Mrs.S would get really focused as it drew nearer. Hopefully it went well without too many things to be fixed last minute. That is when it is really stressful. That's awesome that you are in the music program your freshman year, I wish I had done that. That is a regret I have now looking back at school. I hope you enjoy it, that was one of my favorite things about high school. You're probably excited to get a nice break from school too.

I also have been able to do a few drawings when I've had free time. I'll mail copies out to you when I get a chance to copy them. I still have the drawings you sent me when I was in the MTC. Its fun to do, I wish I hadn't gotten out of practice.

I got a card from Grandma earlier this week, I'm going to write her back too. I hope not too many people wrote back to the MTC address since I have left. That mail I don't think will ever get to me.

I wish I could be with you guys for Christmas, Are you Brad, and you Heather going to stay at mom and dad's? I always loved it when we were all home for that. Have you guys gone out to look at lights yet? We have a few times, well more looked

at them on the way to appointments but I guess that still counts.

I love you all so much and miss you guys a lot. I look forward to being able to call you on Christmas, we get the day off so we'll visit a few members and probably go play football or something -_- but not the same as a normal Christmas. Thanks for the packages again! I really appreciate it! :)

Love,

Elder Phillip Larsen

(Or as Julia calls me Elder Phillip Edward Larsen Older Brother the 1st, or something like that)

Also, more pictures!

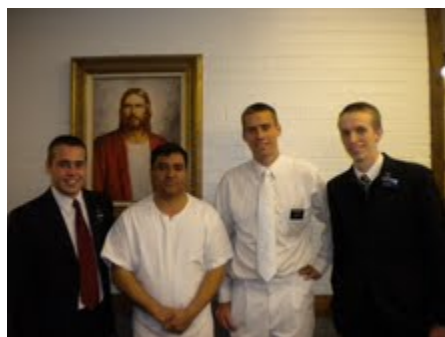
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