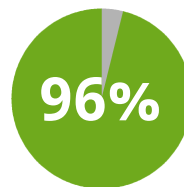


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No Greater Joy



BARBARA & DWIGHT
BOLICK



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CHILE



“I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” (3 John 4)

If you’ve ever taken an extended absence from work, church, friends, or family, you know the same kind of concern, even anxiety, that NT writers felt for the communities they maintained ties with. Would they continue in the faith, guard sound doctrine? Would they flourish in the common life together, just get along without devouring each other? Would they really be the presence of Jesus, transforming their world in the power of the gospel?

I recently returned to Chile for an extended visit, to arrange the transport of our remaining personal effects left in storage. Mainly, I wanted to see and hear our partners and friends, and know that they were still walking and advancing in the truth. The truth as in sound doctrine and right practice, as in being the presence of Jesus Christ in their communities.

I was not disappointed. Rather than list all the people and churches I was able to visit, I will tell you about one church community and its people who are embodying, carrying on the good work that God allowed us to do together for so many years.

As I pulled into the church in Lanco on a Saturday morning, many normal activities of the church were in full swing:

1. A feeding ministry to local elderly, indigent, lonely, often homeless people,
2. The women’s cooperative, Lanitas del Sur, that Barb helped start, was meeting in a back room,

3. Pastor Tomas and volunteers were on the church grounds assembling trusses and prefabricated siding panels for transport to the new mission in Valdivia, a neighboring town,
4. And the Girls' Club, led by Magaly Peña, meets regularly there, bringing up a new generation of girls in the strengths of the heart that the gospel makes possible.

Tomás Vivanco, the pastor, and Daniel, his brother, have been co-laborers with us, dreaming with us, practicing the faith with us, pioneering new initiatives with us for all these years.

Tomás is still going strong with beekeeping, and it enables him to be a more effective pastor and leader in the community. I saw how his apiary has grown, and also got to visit several other beekeepers whose progress and constancy is gratifying to see.

In past years, Daniel, who was the convention president, sacrificed many Saturdays to accompany me and teach with me in the Instituto Berea for the Mapuche churches.

I stood before this beloved church on a Sunday and testified to them from this verse in 3 John. I don't consider them so much children as, better, friends and co-laborers in the gospel of the kingdom of God. This is a church that languished for years because their vision was completely inward, merely surviving.

God is the One who planted and cultivated the vision of walking with Christ on the mission of God, looking and serving outwardly in the community. The church is growing, has a stellar image in the community and enjoys a sweeter fellowship together.

No greater joy.