

August Prayer Update 2023



Pedro and Joy Oliveira-Woolmer *with Mark, Zoe, and Emilia*

Serving the Lord in Uruguay



Dear Friends,

From very early on in our culture and language learning, we became aware of certain “false friends”. For example, *embarazada* actually means pregnant (not “embarrassed”), *inversión* means investment (not “inversion”), and *compromiso* means commitment (not “compromise”).

In the last month or so, we've been reminded that false friends are even more misleading when the differences are only subtle. They're problematic because they can go undetected for years - literally! No one jumps in to correct you (unlike when I told people Pedro was pregnant...), and no one questions your meaning (because it makes linguistic sense). In this prayer letter, we'd like to tell you about two false friends we've recently detected. Both false friends are closely tied with the core of our ministry here in Uruguay, and so we need your prayers as we learn to adjust (quite significantly!) to the way we think, talk, and go about our ministry. Old habits die hard!

University (student) life

University is a time when life-long relationships, life-shaping values, and life-changing decisions are made. Students are confronted with people and ideas that challenge their existing worldview assumptions. There is often openness to explore, experience, and adjust accordingly. The university campus is a place bustling with activity and dialogue. The gospel has so much to say to students who find themselves at a crossroads, asking themselves, "who am I going to be?". This is one of the reasons we love university ministry. You probably know what we're talking about. But that's because you are an Australian university student or graduate, or someone close to you is.

For some time, we've been aware of some of the major differences between the Australian and Uruguayan university experience, and in the last month or so, we've realised that there is really no such thing as "university student life" here. Students don't see their university years as a specific stage of their lives - study is just something they are doing, along with everything else they are doing with their lives. Many students are working at the same time, both for the money and because they may only have a couple of subjects every semester. The university campus is not a place where you meet people or hang around. The majority of students we've spoken to spend less than two hours a day on campus, will opt for virtual classes

whenever possible, and don't expect to make any friends at university. If you're very fortunate, you might make one or two friends over the eight years you're doing your undergraduate - but that would require you and your friends to progress through the degree together. We've heard that passing (and failing) all the same subjects together, for the duration of your degree, is very rare!

You can probably imagine that this has some pretty big implications for campus ministry. It means finding a common time to meet as a Bible study group is really tricky. It means that when we say, "invite your uni. friends to this evangelistic event", it's not obvious to many students who they should be thinking of inviting. But more importantly, it means most Christian students don't see uni. as a mission field. It's a place to get your degree as fast as possible, with as little impact on the rest of your life as possible, so you can get on with it.

Bible study

We didn't really see this one coming - though we probably should have! We've started noticing that people use (or don't use) the term "Bible study" in ways that have surprised us. Some of the women at the Equip Women's Conference thanked Joy for the wonderful "Bible study" they shared together. Others mentioned that they'd recently started a two-year "Bible study" at church on the book of Romans. Since coming back to Uruguay, we've joined a church Bible study group. At least, that's what we'd been calling it until we realised no one else was calling it that. It's actually a "home group" or a "Bible class" - a time when we meet together at one of the pastors' homes to listen to a semi-interactive sermon. And so while most Christians agree that Bible study is a great and vital part of Christian maturity, it's not normally a time of learning to read the Bible for yourself, asking questions, and reading the text on its own terms. Those attending these groups don't study the Bible so much as they hear from the one who studied it that week.

So we need to call what we do, something else!

A special thank you from Joy

I just wanted to say what a great big hug I felt from so many of you in response to our July prayer update. Thank you for your empathy, words of comfort and encouragement, and reminders of our powerful God. Your emails were a beautiful expression of partnership to me, and I treasure them as I treasure you!

Thank God

- for the 16 women who attended Equip Women's Conference and particularly for the deepening of relationships Joy is enjoying with some of the women from the group.
- for Anita, an older lady from church, who has started reading Philippians with Joy.
- for Joy's Spanish lessons with Susana, for the progress in language but also their growing friendship, and the conversations they're having about life and faith.
- that Mark enjoyed school camp and came home happy and whole!
- for four new MOCLAM students this semester, including a CBU staff member.



Equip23: Thank God for the lessons from his Word and deepening relationships.

Please pray

- for our MOCLAM classes (three this semester), due to begin over the next few weeks.
- for a new Bible study to get underway in the teaching faculty and for a solid, committed student core.
- for plans for a mission week in September and that we are bold in bringing the good news to non-Christians, rather than hoping they come to us.

- for good management of Pedro's ongoing IBS symptoms.



School camp! (Can you spot the back of Mark's head?)

Another way to support us

Would you help us as we look to getting a car in Uruguay? We'd love you to click [here](https://cloud.connect.cms.org.au/pedrojoy) (link: cloud.connect.cms.org.au/pedrojoy) and find out why this would be a great help to us! Thank you!

Tell us you've prayed!

From Pedro, Joy, Mark, Zoe and Emilia

*"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that
increases to your credit."*

Philippians 4:17

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