



# The BONHAM Family

I'm not sure how it happened, but somehow I find myself getting ready for our second Christmas in Arequipa. How is that possible? Didn't we just get here?

December 18<sup>th</sup> marks 1 year since our plane landed here in "the white city" of Arequipa, Peru. For Nikki and the kids, it was their first time laying eyes on this beautiful city, and from the moment we saw the enormous "El Misti" volcano towering overhead, we were all hooked. It's nearly impossible not to fall in love with this place. But despite the beauty of the city and the excitement of finally arriving in the long-term ministry location we'd spent years praying for, the reality was that we were swirling in chaos.



"Our first glimpse of Arequipa"

This time last year, we were steadily moving forward in our Spanish, but still not very confident. We had just started really feeling "at home" in Colombia when we packed up and moved again to a city where we didn't know a single person other than a taxi driver named Jesús. We had just downsized everything we owned to the bare minimum (again) and made another international move...for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 15 months. We bounced around from temporary housing in Bogotá while we closed up our lives there to temporary housing in Lima while we worked on visa paperwork to temporary housing in Arequipa while we house-hunted for something permanent, all while living out of a couple of suitcases. And sweet little Luís, who had only been home with us for a few short months and was just starting to adjust to his new life, had his world turned upside down AGAIN when we moved, and he regressed once more into puddles of anxiety and fear. And all just a week before Christmas. We found a \$20 Christmas tree and a few decorations, bought a few simple gifts for the boys, and celebrated with thankfulness that the Lord had faithfully brought us here. But needless to say, my memories of our first Christmas in Arequipa are a big blur of just trying to survive the chaos.



"Last year's whirlwind Christmas"

And now here we are, a year later, approaching our second Christmas in Arequipa, and things look much different. This Christmas, we find ourselves in a city that we have grown to love, in a sweet little home that meets all of our needs, laboring alongside a tiny church family that has embraced us with open arms, finding opportunities for ministry in all parts of the city, a steadily growing confidence in our language abilities, and a burgeoning community that we

cherish. And not to mention our favorite little Colombian who is adjusting beautifully, thriving in his family, and making developmental strides all across the board. What a difference a year makes!



"Christmas 2014"

Sometimes I wonder how we got from there to here in only 12 short months, but the answer is simple; the Lord has been so faithful in meeting our needs and answering the prayers of our team and our supporters. He has given us one opportunity after the next to jump in head-first into the city and culture if we only keep our eyes and hearts open for them. He has protected us and guided us every step of the way into situations that have developed into real relationships and opportunities to share the gospel.

But practically speaking, it has certainly been a full and busy 12 months!

Nate has had the chance to lead bible studies, prayer groups, and a growing community youth ministry. He has preached in Spanish, counseled in Spanish, met with pastors around the city, participated in a short-term trip in another part of Peru, traveled across the world for leadership



"Nate preaching at our church in Spanish"

training with our missions agency, become part of an Andino music group, and developed thriving cross-cultural friendships.



"Nate playing with 'Jesus el Verbo', an Andino music group."

Nikki has jumped back into Spanish class, become involved in the women's ministry at their small church, started learning how to cook a few Peruvian dishes, had the opportunity to try her hand at teaching bible study in Spanish, begun homeschooling, and has begun making sweet Peruvian friends.

The three superheroes of the house went to an all-Spanish preschool for 6 months for a language boost, then started homeschooling with Nikki in October. The twins, Noah and Barrett (4), are making strides in their Spanish and have enjoyed jumping into preschool/kindergarten at home. Luís (5) goes to four therapy sessions a week with an excellent therapy group and is making progress in every area. His English is getting better and better, and his ability to communicate impresses us more every day. His psychologist has told us numerous times how obvious it is that Luís is "an exceptionally happy child," and that of course makes our hearts overflow with happiness and thanksgiving. When the boys aren't in the middle of school or therapy, they are



"The twins hard at work. They have enjoyed 'school with mama', as they call it!"



“The boys on their first day of preschool last March.”

sword-fighting, wrestling, and rescuing the world dressed up as the superhero of the day, whatever it may be. There is never a dull (or quiet!) moment, to be sure! We have also added a sweet new puppy named Lucy to the family, and she is a handful in every sense of the word. She’s also growing a little faster than we thought, and it looks like we might have a bigger dog than we had planned!



“Lucy”

Thankfully, with the busyness and fullness has come such joy and thankfulness as well! We feel so utterly blessed to be serving the Lord here in Arequipa, and we are constantly amazed at the ways that He proves himself faithful in our lives and ministry again and again. We have no idea what next year will bring or what life will look like 12 months from now. But we do know that no matter where the next year finds us, we can walk into this Christmas season with confidence that, even in the midst of chaos and change, He is good and steady and faithful.

Merry Christmas from the Bonhams!



“Barrett, Nate, Luis, Nikki & Noah”



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