

It's so great to hear from many of my supporters of the work that has been going on back home and I am thrilled to hear of your prayers for me and the team over here in California as we head into a new year with new excitements and new hurdles together.

I've been here for just over two weeks now and it has been incredible how much I've already learnt and experienced from being here.

We have safely arrived in Los Angeles at the YWAM base here where my address is:

*Ben Grist CDTS
11141 Osborne Street
Lake View Terrace
Los Angeles
CA 91342*

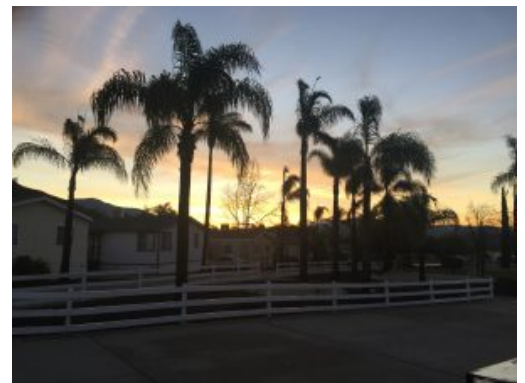
I am living in a small house with 8 other guys who are on my school, several from America and a few from Europe and I'm the only Brit! My school is led by Christie and Javier Lopez, YWAM missionaries for the last 6 years, and I have been having a great time getting to know the other 18 people on my school. The first few days consisted of getting to know the other people living on the base, fellowship nights, orientation and registration whilst we recovered from jetlag and realised where we actually would now be living!



It has been great to get to know the rest of the people on my course so quickly and living in a Christian community like this has been one of my excitements even before arriving here. It has been incredible always having fellow Christian brothers and sisters around me sharing our lives together as we each grow in relationship with each other and with Jesus throughout the term.

Despite getting up at 5:30am every day for my run and devotion before breakfast, mornings have felt a lot easier to wake up to knowing it's almost always a beautiful and warm day with an incredible view of Burbank, Universal City and Los Angeles behind it.

Jesus has been showing me many things about myself and about the area I'm now living in that I have spent time praying about and seeking his guidance in.



We have spent much time allowing God to fill our entire bodies and minds as we gave up distractions that were holding us back from giving this time completely to him.

Local Outreach

Exactly one week from having arrived, we were all taken to Griffith Observatory overlooking the city of Los Angeles and amongst admiring the beauty of creation and wonder of the city, we identified the different spheres of influence and culture of the area and prayed for continued blessing and breakthrough of strongholds. We saw the skyscrapers of the city in the distance behind the smog and we noticed the sheer breadth and influence of this city on the surrounding area.



This past Friday a group of us went to Hollywood to meet with people and pray with those God put on our heart as well as praying for the area. As we walked through the boulevard, we noticed how all of the shops were there to satisfy this desire fill this empty satisfaction, everything from lust and greed to pretend riches. God has been showing me many struggles with the people of Los Angeles, but one in particular that stood out to me and that God kept on reminding me about was how, as an acting culture, Los Angeles and Hollywood have allowed people to wear masks of their identity, being told they can be whoever they want to be and finding unfulfilled satisfaction in these lifestyles.



God has also been showing me this in our times of creative intercession as a school and how he longs for change and people to stand up to this injustice and sin.

More details about what we've been getting up to in our local outreach will be included in the next few updates.

Classes

Though we've been doing plenty of practical learning, from on the spot evangelism, to the humbling job of gardening as a work duty, we've also been having inspiring academic input from speakers each week.

Every day we have morning and afternoon classes on Biblical principles and are going through several books such as 'Compassion' by Henri J.M. Nouwen, a really meaty read, as well as some more quirky books on intimacy and relationships such as 'Scary Close' by Donald Miller which we are going through in our small groups each week.



This week we also started our first lectures on the topic of the 'Nature and Character of God' lead by Peter Warren, a previous YWAM Los Angeles leader and current leader of YWAM Denver. The stories of experiences that he shared combined with his passion and understanding of the Bible explained well the topic in enough detail for everyone to take something out of it.

International Outreach

Some good news for you, yesterday we found out that my half of the Discipleship Training School shall be spending the majority of our Outreach on mission in **Kenya** and the **Philippines!**

More details will follow when I know more, but please be praying for our team, and the team who will be going to Mexico and Costa Rica, for provision in our preparation for the outreach starting in April.



There has been a lot going on, but that hasn't stopped us from having time to stop and relax as well as appreciate the area. As well as going to Griffith Observatory and Hollywood, over the weekend some of us went down to Venice Beach for the day and spent the afternoon at Santa Monica Pier which has featured on a number of films and shows.

Though we have only been here for two Sundays now, I have had the chance to attend a couple of different church services in the city. Though I am still seeking guidance on where to settle, it has been encouraging meeting many different people and joining with those from different Christian backgrounds.

On base, we also have Monday morning worship – which is incredible – along with community nights, morning intercession, weekly Bible studies and daily morning devotions with my school.

Prayer points

That the Holy spirit would continue breaking down walls in our lives and in our open hearts, that God would be transforming us day by day.

That we would find Sabbath amongst such an intense programme and lifestyle whilst living on the base and training for his good works.

That God would continue blessing our outreach in the city and preparation for outreach to Kenya and the Philippines.

There is so much more I could say, but for now I'd just like to reassure you all that things are going really well and the Holy Spirit is here!

