

Joe's Bolivian updates — Spring 2020

Bolivia is feeling the effects of the Coronavirus and has been in lockdown for a month. The lockdown is quite draconian and feels like house arrest! you are allowed out the house one morning a week on the day designated by your Id card to do grocery shopping. At the w/e the only things open are the chemist and the hospital. If the police catch you breaking the rules you run the risk of a £120 fine and 8 hours in prison.

The virus is having a large economic impact on ordinary families in the country, many work in the informal economy and live day to day and aren't prepared for this level of disruption, especially after the political crisis at the end of last year.

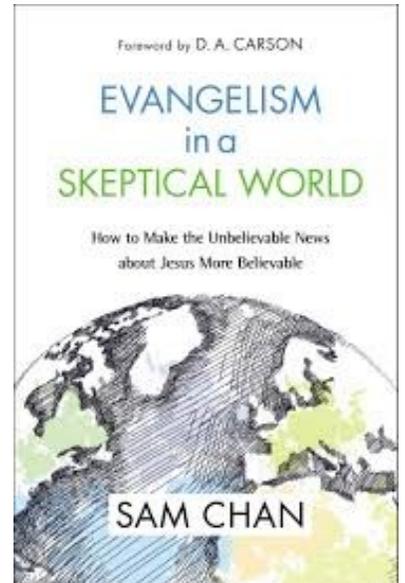
This has reduced our work, as the premises have remained closed. We have managed to continue running two of the courses through zoom and we continue to offer counselling services through WhatsApp. I have continued doing mentoring sessions through WhatsApp, however not all the students have privacy in their homes or wifi, which poses its challenges. I have also been writing some materials. This has given me the chance to do some reading and I would recommend the book *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* by Sam Chan, which does what it says on the cover.

In Sucre there has only been one case of the virus and that was 3 weeks ago. There is a realistic prospect that the restrictions could be eased at the start of May. It would be great to see familiar faces again, as apart from the 20 hours when I was locked out of my house, I haven't seen anybody I know since 17th March.

I started to experience health issues just before the lockdown started. At first it wasn't overly clear what was wrong and I was advised to try different things, from pain killers to an inhaler, but it didn't seem to help. I have nearly finished a 2 weeks course of meds and the symptoms have reduced a lot. I can imagine that many people are struggling with anxiety, fear and sometimes feeling like this is never going to end. One song that has helped me is called "Christ our Glory" by Sovereign grace music. As it reminds us where to fix our eyes.



The not so busy streets of Sucre



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Points of praise,

- That Sucre has been relatively unaffected by the coronavirus from a medical perspective.
- For a Good time of fellowship had at the annual national Alfarero retreat in Santa Cruz.

Points of prayer

- During this period it is going to be one of reflection on how we do ministry, please pray that the decisions taken at Alfarero are God honouring and help us minister to the students better.
- Economically this is the 2nd shock to the project in 6 months, please pray that a lack of finance wouldn't get in the way of ministry or become the sole focus of the project.
- There is a lot of stigma surrounding the virus, both from the general public and health care professionals. Please pray that people would seek treatment when needed and would not be denied treatment because of the stigma.

Please let me know your news