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As our last afternoon together quickly changed to evening, we took some time to pray and talk at the feet of the "Christ of the Mercy" statue overlooking San Juan del Sur. It was there that we talked about our future and, in spite of any anxiety I may have had, I asked her if she would be my girlfriend. The next day, we walked into the airport holding hands as boyfriend and girlfriend. We said our goodbyes and started the 293-day countdown until we would see each other in person again.

The month between the start of our relationship and deployment was wonderful, yet it flew by in the blink of an eye. Next thing we knew, I was on a plane to Iraq. I had no idea what God had in store for us. Throughout the next nine months we were able to stay in almost constant contact and had weekly Skype dates and prayer times, despite our nine hour time difference and connectivity issues. I will never be able to thank God, nor Tania enough for the source of encouragement and love that she was during my deployment. Looking back, I can see how perfect God's timing was. It was hard to be so far from my friends and family. But the love, patience and respect she showed me was such a tremendous blessing from God!

By his grace, we were able to grow during the deployment. On 27 July, after a long wait, we got engaged while we were standing on the water line of the Apoyo lagoon in Nicaragua. We had been traveling with a group of disciples from Charleston, SC who were there on a mission trip. The plan had been to ask her to marry me at the same location we had starting dating, but I was told she was expecting this and so took the advice and decided differently to surprise her. It was wonderful to be with friends and disciples on such a special and important occasion. The claps and cheers from the random strangers who witnessed the engagement added to the encouragement! We were married just a few months later in October.

Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

God has certainly been so good to us and done so much more than we could have ever hoped or dreamed for. It is truly remarkable to see how God used the advice of those close to us to persuade us into using the site at the same time. We are grateful to the site, for all our friends who were a great support, encouragement and advisors and even more so to God, for all he has done for us this past year!

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- ***31 Days of Prayer: Day 18***
  Daniel Berk, Chicago, IL, USA — Wednesday, 17 January 2018
  Editor's note: Join disciples around the world in January as we devote ourselves to prayer and action. Each day, Disciples Today will publish a devotional from 31 Days of Prayer by Daniel Berk. Follow along on Facebook with your comments and prayer requests...

- ***HOPEww Adventure Corps: Alaska Into the Wild!***
  HOPE worldwide — Monday, 15 January 2018
  We are very excited to announce a brand new program here at HOPE worldwide: HOPE worldwide ADVENTURE CORPS! The Adventure Corps is an experiential learning and leadership training program. Although there is a service component for two days where...

- ***Permissible, Beneficial, Constructive***
  Fred Faller, Boston, MA, USA — Wednesday, 10 January 2018
  In the life of any church, there will be times when there needs to be settlement about issues that are dividing people. Typically, the division has already existed in the hearts of those dividing from one another lon...

- ***OYC: More Baptisms***
  One Year Challenge — Thursday, 11 January 2018
  Two disciples, Dillon and Chelsea, volunteered several years ago for an OYC. This past Sunday, we saw God bless their faith with two more friends baptized at the OYC sites where they went to serve.

• *UPCOMING EVENTS*

Spring Leadership Meetings
Orlando, Florida USA
March 19-23, 2018

International Campus Ministry Conference
Cincinnati, Ohio USA
July 5-8, 2018

2018 NE US Christian Conference
Providence, Rhode Island USA
July 20-22, 2018

Florida Discipleship Conference
Orlando, Florida USA
August 3-5, 2018

International Singles Conference
Phoenix, Arizona USA
August 30 - September 3, 2018

Central American Conference
Panama City , Panama
October 5 - 7, 2018

2020 World Discipleship Summit
Orlando, Florida USA
July 2-5, 2020

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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KNN@DToday.org
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DTHS Wedding: Nick & Tania, Married October 2017

Nick Ball, Columbia, MO, USA



Congratulations to Nick & Tania, one of the recent couples married through DT Heart & Soul, the dating website of the International Churches of Christ. At least 70 couples have been married so far! Read their stories here.

I (Nick) first signed up for DTHS in June 2016 for one month after the persistent advice from a brother who also found his wife on DTHS. Tania had been on the site for 2.5 years over a four-year period. On 08 July, after a week of debating and praying if she should message me, Tania sent me a greetings message. We hit it off right out of the gate and started to build a friendship. On 24 July we had our very first Skype conversation. In spite of some minor connection issues, our first face-to-face conversation was wonderful! It didn't take long for us to decide that it was time for us to meet in person. On 28 Sep 2016 I landed in Managua and one of the most meaningful visits of our lives began.

For me, it was unusual to be in a country where most people did not speak English. Fortunately for me, part of Tania's job is translating between Spanish and English. On my last full day in Nicaragua we traveled to a small beach town on the Atlantic coast called San Juan del Sur. I knew I had to talk to her about my feelings for her but I had a tremendous apprehension towards starting a relationship. I was a month and a day from a combat deployment to Iraq. Having never dated in the kingdom I was battling a lot of doubts about my ability to lead from such a distance and in such circumstances.

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