

Missions Trip to London and Amsterdam June 2023



Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. Col 3:23

JOY!

This was our trip's theme - with daily devotionals reflecting on various verses that talk about this theme.

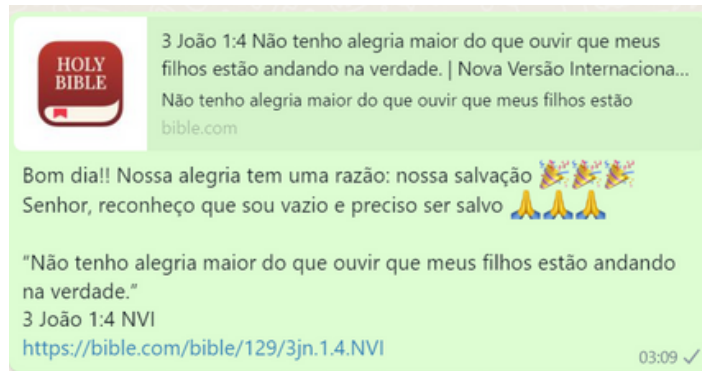
Dear supporters, we hope you are doing great! In this summary we want to transmit and share with you our experiences during the trip to Europe. We want you to be inside the whole process and see with photos and comments what we feel and what God did.

Some information you can expect to find here includes:

- Reports of how the days went;
- Photos and videos of the trip;
- Testimonials from people;
- Special thanks to our supporters.

Take a closer look at how important your support was on this trip!

• DAILY DEVOTIONALS



Every day of the trip, we received messages like the one above in the WhatsApp group. And we had half an hour to reflect individually on the verse. Our purpose was to write something about that verse, either a reflection or thought. Afterwards, we would pray with a fellow student. Here's an example of a note from one of the students, about this verse above:

"I opened my Bible to continue reading and ended up going to another passage: 'Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.' Psalms 71:17."

My prayer after reading the two verses: God, may it be my desire to declare your marvelous deeds, and may what you have planted in our hearts never fade away. Make us sensitive to your voice and fill us with love for You and for one another, so that Joy may not only be a topic but our foundation every day. May we see that regardless of any situation, it is all merely a detail when compared to Your greatness.

I remember seeing the neighbor on that day; he showed up, and Joel said something to him. It seemed new to him to see so many people sitting outside reading and praying. I included him in my prayer that day as well. It was the day of the worship service, and I asked that we could serve with joyful hearts.

It was a good day for me during the devotional."

• DEPARTURE



The long-awaited moment has arrived! On June 20th, we headed to Guarulhos Airport, beginning an exciting and long awaited adventure.

• STOP IN PORTUGAL



We had the opportunity to visit Portugal, as we would spend 30 hours in the country, tasting the old and famous Pastel de Belém that has enchanted the hearts of many and enjoying the scenery before us.

- **AT LAST, LONDON**

London captured each one of our hearts and brought us together as a family! Spending time with the people from Hope Church was incredible; we shared our stories, played some good football (even though we lost), and I'm sure we built great connections. We also got to know the Pedro Youth Club, helped out, and left behind a beautiful mural!

However, before anything else, we met the lovely couple, Rob and Lynn, who welcomed us into their home. After settling our belongings in the rooms, Rob offered to be our tour guide and shared amazing things about the city.

We also had the opportunity to visit Cambridge, take a boat tour, and challenge ourselves a little more.

London offered us fantastic stories and new experiences, from eating on the streets to having a picnic in front of Big Ben. There were so many stories; God showed His presence and care throughout.





The Hope Church does an incredible and welcoming work. Being with them was all about conveying God's love and renewing our energies. Throughout our time together, we shared testimonies and praised God both in Portuguese and English.

During our visit to Hope Church, we led their youth meeting, evangelized on a busy square, played soccer, and were invited to a barbecue at the pastor's house. We participated in Sunday worship, performed a play, shared testimonies, and worshiped together. Sunday evening we spent time at a huge swimming pool with the brothers and sisters from Hope. We felt the abundant love of Christ every day we were there, and we are so grateful for it.

We were greatly blessed, and we also blessed others - all thanks to God.



Pastor Gary not only welcomed 30 people into his home but also personally spent most of his time preparing the barbecue. Thank you for serving us so graciously.

• YOUTH GROUP AT HOPE



Hope Church has five congregations in the surroundings of Bromley, and once a month, the young people from these five congregations gather together. We had the honor of leading one of these meetings.

We taught the English youth how to sing "O Nosso General é Cristo" (Our General is Christ) - it was so much fun - there was a lot of joy. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

The presence of the Lord during the worship in the old English church was very evident. We could feel the Holy Spirit working among everyone - there was so much joy and unity between our group and the English youth.

Memorable moments: "The day we visited the churches, we met incredible people and were warmly welcomed."

— Letícia Nascimento

• STREET EVANGELISM



For most of us, it was the first time. We sang some worship songs and then performed the play 'Lighthouse,' a performance with background music and no dialogues. The play depicts the story of a young woman who comes to know Jesus, drifts away from God, but eventually returns to the Lord.

As we performed, we handed out roses to people who stopped to watch and shared about our project. Many people were moved to tears by the play. Others expressed gratitude and encouraged us for our efforts. One woman was eager to donate money to our project, and we directed her to our website. Some others stopped and watched but declined any further interest.

The presence of God was truly powerful. We know that God was present and worked in the lives of the people who watched. And He also worked in our lives as we learned from these experiences.

Memorable Moments: "I had no idea that so many people would stop on the street just to watch the play. Seeing their reactions was amazing; some even showed interest in VidaGol."

— Beatriz Matsumoto"

- **FOOTBALL WITH HOPE CHURCH**



VidaGol started with soccer, and today we do many other things, but we love soccer (some more than others, haha). Nevertheless, God provided two games for our team.

The first one was with the people from Hope Church.

Soccer brings people together - it's an incredible tool for the Lord, as long as emotions don't get too heated! And this time, it was like that - a lot of peace and joy from the VidaGol team, as well as from most of the opponents.

We lost on penalties...

Memorable Moments:

"The day of the soccer match, and then the barbecue at the pastor's house, was very memorable because, at the same time that I missed the penalty, afterward we were so happy with some very special people."

— João Tobias

- **BARBEQUE AT PASTOR GARY'S HOUSE**



Pastor Gary is married and has two daughters and a son - all of whom actively participated in our time together. It was really nice to get to know him and his family. They all served us with great intensity.

We got to know some of the players from the Hope team better. We had conversations with them, understood their challenges, prayed together, and exchanged contacts. These are new friendships that will surely endure.

On the way back home, the joy was so overwhelming that we were singing upstairs on the London bus. Thank you, Lord!!!

- **PARTICIPATING AT THE SUNDAY SERVICE AT HOPE CHURCH ORPINGTON**



On Sunday, we took the train and bus to attend the Sunday meeting at Hope Church Orpington. Our group participated in the worship, and once again, we taught the entire church the song "O Nosso General é Cristo" (Our General is Christ). It was really cool. We also played some other worship songs.

Afterwards, we performed the "Lighthouse" play again. The church was very engaged, and when the young woman was set free by Jesus, the entire church clapped and celebrated Jesus' victory in her life! It was incredibly emotional.

In the afternoon, we had a cultural experience by having lunch at an English Pub, and some of us tried a pint of English beer. Later, vans organized by the church took us to Faversham, a small town in Kent County, where the church had rented a huge swimming pool with diving boards of various heights (up to 5 meters!). They also served burgers for everyone. The day was already special for the church, and they invited us to join. It was wonderful - for many, it was the highlight of the trip!

On the way back in the van, we couldn't stop singing - for almost an hour and a half!
So much joy :)

- **THE CLEANING OF THE KNOCKED-DOWN WALL AND THE NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD**



On Monday morning, the men started their work early, beginning to clean Rob's backyard. A wall had to be knocked down as it was unstable, and our first task was to clear the debris. We created a human chain to transfer the debris from the backyard to the front of the house where the dumpster was placed.

The neighbor at the back of the house also had a lot of debris in her garden, and Rob had spoken to her about our desire to help. She was very grateful for our assistance, and we cleaned up a lot of debris from her property.

It was great to be able to serve our neighbors, especially considering that a group like ours tends to make a lot of noise, and in England, quietness is highly valued in residential areas. As it is normal for a group like ours to generate noise, we were happy to demonstrate love and consideration for our neighbors.

• THE PEDRO CLUB - COMMUNITY SERVICE



One of Rob's neighbors is Brian, who works as a caretaker at Hackney Marshes Park, a park with over 70 football fields and various other sports facilities. It's known as the birthplace of English football, where talents like David Beckham and Ian Wright emerged. Brian's wife, Maralyn, works at The Pedro Club, which is located next to the park. The Pedro Club is a social project founded by a former British boxer named James Cook, who was the European super-middleweight champion.

God opened the door for us to work with The Pedro Club and the management team at Hackney Marshes through Brian and Maralyn. We had the opportunity to serve at the club, where there was a great need for organizing materials. They welcomed us warmly, served us lunch, and we met a young Portuguese guy who works there and trains in boxing.

Later, we walked to Hackney Marshes to play with a team organized by Brian. This time, we managed to win, and afterward, they served us a great dinner. We had the chance to interact with the organization's staff, which consisted mainly of Brian's family and friends who volunteered to help us. Our testimony impacted Brian and his team significantly. They were pleased and impressed by how respectful we were and how we always sought to obey the rules and act in the best way possible.

Memorable Moments:

"I really enjoyed working together at The Pedro Club. I felt like we were truly making a difference for those people."

— Noemi

- CAMBRIDGE



We had the opportunity to visit Cambridge, a university city and home to one of the best universities in the world.

Exploring the city, shopping, taking a boat trip, and some of us even daring to row - it all led to good laughter and memorable moments.

Memorable Moments:

"Here, I share my personal experience of learning how to row a boat with Sam looking at me with that expression and shouting - RIGHT! LEFT, REBECA! LEFT! - I must say, it was only by God's mercy that we made it there with my camera still dry!! Hallelujah."

— Rebeca Assis

• AMSTERDAM



Amsterdam was all about overcoming challenges, walking several kilometers against the wind and rain. It was tough, but with determination, we managed to overcome and explore amazing places! We had the pleasure of meeting Anya while riding our bikes and sharing the Word of God with her!

On the last day, we even played a game of tag, got caught in the rain, and laughed a lot!

• ARRIVAL AND RENTING BIKES

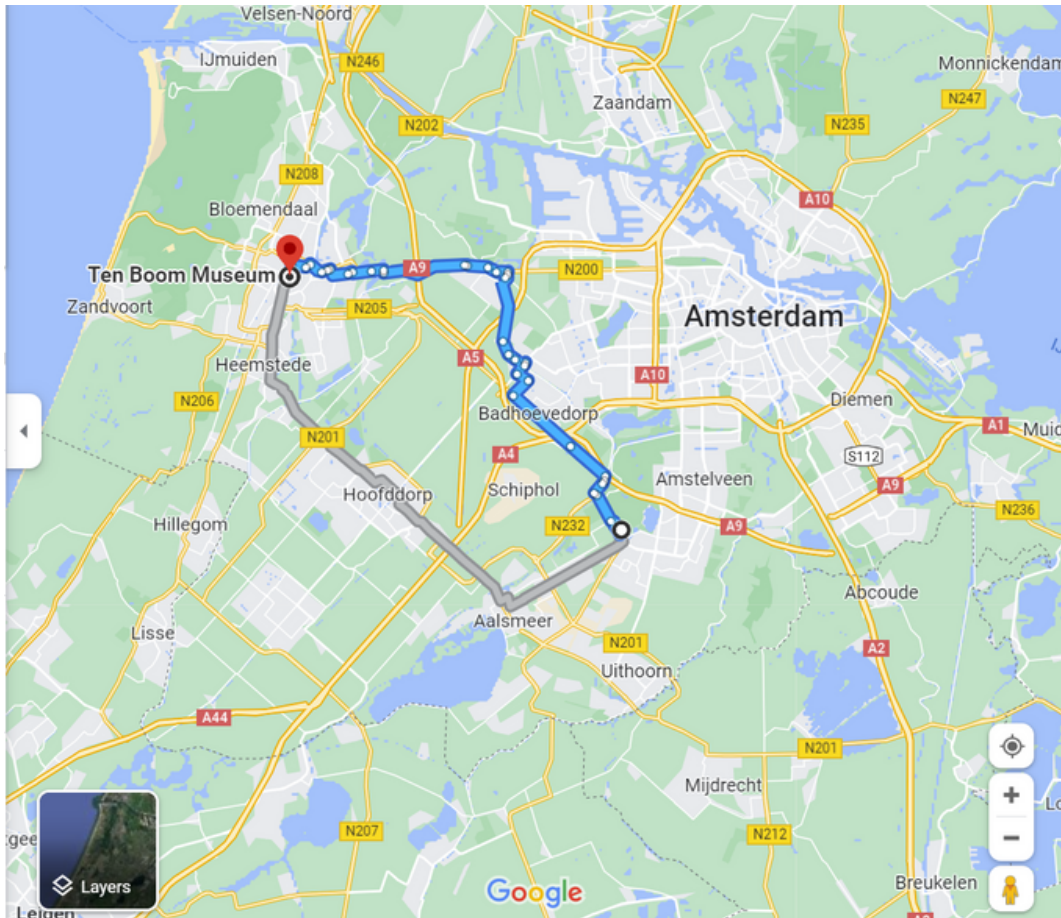


Anna Julia, an example of determination and enthusiasm for all of us!

The idea of taking the VidaGol Gap Year students to Amsterdam for bike riding wasn't just for fun but to challenge them. At VidaGol, we believe that extracurricular activities are essential for the development of young people. Yes, sports are part of it, but also other activities that challenge them physically. It could be biking long distances or walking many kilometers on unfamiliar routes.

In John Bunyan's book "The Pilgrim's Progress," he uses Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City as an allegory of our spiritual journey from the World to Heaven. In ancient times, physical effort was part of daily life, requiring great determination from people. However, in recent times, many young people don't face these physical demands, and that is missing in their development. The willpower needed to overcome physical challenges helps us understand that the same determination will help us overcome spiritual challenges.

- **50 KM VISITING HAARLEM**



The story of Corrie Ten Boom and her family in Haarlem during World War II is truly inspiring. Their bravery and love for others, especially for the persecuted Jews, serve as a powerful life lesson for all of us. The hidden shelters they built in their home to protect those in danger show the depth of compassion and selflessness they had.

Visiting the museum that was once their home must have been a profound experience for some members of your group, as it allows us to connect with history and witness the impact of courageous acts in the face of adversity.

Organizing the cyclists into groups, with a mix of experienced and inexperienced riders, was a great way to create a supportive and inclusive environment. The effort and determination shown by all the Gap Year students are a testament to their willingness to challenge themselves and push beyond their limits. And with God's grace, you were able to avoid any accidents during your bike rides.

• MEETING ANYA



When we were returning from Haarlem, one of the groups passed by a lady standing on a bridge, smoking a cigarette, and looking at the view. We noticed that she was crying and asked if she was okay. We felt that there might be some sadness there and potentially thoughts of suicide due to it being a bridge.

She opened up to us, saying that she is a refugee from Ukraine and was crying because her parents are near the frontlines in the war with Russia and in great danger. We gave her many hugs, told her that Jesus loves her, and that this encounter was not a coincidence. She was deeply moved, and a few days later, she visited us at our camp.

Memorable Moment:

"One of my favorite moments of the trip was meeting Anya after biking 45 km, which, for me, was a challenge since I didn't know how to ride a bike properly. But having this divine encounter with Anya touched my heart. She needed hope, and I think we showed her a bit of that."

— Anna Julia

• EUROPARCS AMSTELVEEN - OUT CAMP



We give thanks to God for the campsite where we stayed. On a rainy day, we spent the whole day at the campsite, enjoying the location and resting from the days of cycling. We had some blessed meetings where God worked in our hearts, and we could encourage each other in our faith!

The men stayed in three more basic accommodations (seen in the photo) while the women stayed in accommodations with bathrooms and even a kitchen. These accommodations served as meeting and dining areas for everyone. It was amazing how hard they worked to prepare snacks for the 30 people and delicious meals. We are so grateful to them!!!

- **AMSTERDAM - VAN GOGH MUSEUM AND ANNE FRANK**



One of the classes provided at VidaGol is an art class, taught by our dear Esther Araújo. We had the opportunity to visit the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam and enjoy some of the most well-known paintings in all of history, and being able to do this with Esther was certainly a great privilege.

Other students had the chance to visit the Anne Frank House, where they learned about the life of Anne Frank, a young German Jewish girl persecuted during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Her diary, which later became a published account, provides a heartbreaking glimpse into the atrocities committed by the German army.

Some students chose to spend their time shopping and relaxing in Amsterdam's parks, creating a day of leisure and relaxation. While at the park, they had the opportunity to meet various people and share their faith and the reasons that brought them to Amsterdam.

- **ZAANSE SCHANS**



We also had the opportunity to visit the postcard of the Netherlands, Zaanse Schans, where one can find the famous windmills, small cheese factories, and wooden shoe craftsmanship, not to mention the picturesque sheep and gardens that are part of the Dutch postcard scene.

The trip also provided a wonderful opportunity for members to get to know each other better, especially those who hadn't interacted closely before. Spending this time together allowed everyone to learn how to bless and support one another, strengthening the bond within the group.

Challenging journeys like this not only create lasting memories but also foster personal growth and teamwork. The beauty of Zaanse Schans and the shared experiences along the way surely left a deep impression on all, making it a cherished part of the trip's adventures.

• PERSONAL TESTIMONIES



Simply incredible. That's it. God has done so much in the lives of these young people who make up the VidaGol Gap Year 2023 class. On a certain day in Amsterdam we spent about 3 to 4 hours listening to the testimonies of each student. It was so exciting!!! God has done so much work in each person's life.

And He's been using some very important people to do that work on them. And we want to take this opportunity to thank God for Gustavo and Geisa, who work every day at VidaGol, spiritually feeding these young people. They have been the tools God has used to prepare them for all that has been lived on this journey. Thank you!!!!

They were strong, passionate, exciting testimonies. Thank you Lord!

We miss Pedrinho very much, but God is in control and knows all things.

- RETURNING



This journey has undoubtedly left a genuine mark on VidaGol. We often hear that Europeans can be perceived as cold and distant, but we were warmly welcomed by everyone in the church we served, with the love of Jesus shining through in every gesture. Throughout the trip, we had the opportunity to know each other's hearts better, sharing our testimonies and witnessing firsthand how VidaGol has impacted the lives of these young individuals. The strong sense of fellowship and camaraderie that we experienced every day brought us closer together and provided an abundance of joy and laughter. This trip will surely be remembered for the rest of our lives.

The theme of our mission was Joy, and indeed, our contagious happiness spread to everyone around us. It was a dream come true, and we are deeply grateful for the support of the donors and everyone who believed in us and the purpose of this journey. Their collaboration and belief in us made everything possible, and we will be eternally grateful.