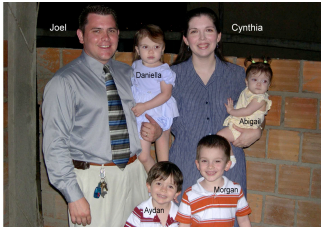


Dickens Family To Brazil



February 2007

Dear Praying Saints,

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The Lord has been teaching me that the definition of a missionary includes, but is not limited to – pastor, evangelist, Sunday School teacher, professor, marriage counselor, treasurer, solver of minor crises, child care provider, husband, father, but most importantly faithful child of God, and I am loving every minute of it. This past two months God has been teaching me plenty about the work here and working with Brazilians. I have always been one to want to see the conversions take place in big numbers and quickly. Things don't work that way here. I am coming to understand why Paul wrote, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." It would be easy to get discouraged at not seeing the results pile up and the baptistery waters stirred three times a week, but when Elisangela and Silvio show up every week with their two children and they say, "Pastor, our son is becoming a different child since we started coming to church here.", well suddenly I understand there is another seed planted. When Elisangela recounts to Cynthia that Silvio is changing for the better in their relationship together, and when we hear that he is confronting his friends about the doctrinal errors of their religion and sharing the Gospel, we are encouraged that God is working. Our handful of folks are remaining faithful and learning more and more. We are studying baptism right now and they are amazed that anyone could teach, from the same Bible that we use, that baptism by sprinkling or pouring is biblical. Pray that Elisangela and Silvio and Valdemir and Maria decide to get married legally so we can baptize them biblically. You may think why not baptize them? Well, simply put, I would hate to baptize someone into the membership of our church next week, and the following week, have to discipline them out. Some might say this might stump spiritual growth. The majority of Brazilian couples are not married, but living together and have been for years. We are studying the family on Sunday evenings. Our goal is to train them in the Biblical meaning of marriage and see them get that aspect of their lives right. God has blessed with several new contacts and families. Carlos and Debora are a couple we are studying with that have a real desire to learn the Bible, but are having marital problems and need earnest prayer; first for their salvation and then for the reconciling of their marriage. We have started holding a ladies meeting once a month and I am beginning to hold a men's breakfast once a month. Next month I return to teaching in the Bible Institute with Bro. Nash. I am looking forward to teaching II Timothy. Cynthia will be starting back to school with the children in the coming weeks as well as caring for the house and keeping me in line.

Note to self, "At 4:30 a.m. when it has rained all day and you go to let the dog out, always wear sandals and turn on the kitchen lights. It is much easier to both see and kill infiltrating **scorpions**." I still get the creeps thinking how close I came to stepping on the little thing. He was tough to kill too, but Cynthia forgave me for waking her up with the loud noises since I had been so heroic.

Second note, "Missionary children who live in arid areas and whose yard is all concrete will inevitably ask when they see grass, 'Daddy, what is that green stuff?' Throw some dirt on the concrete and plant grass."

Third note, "When you buy the big dog to guard the house and play with the children, don't be surprised when the dog food bill goes up." She is a pretty pup, but she will soon be close to my weight and height when she stands on her back legs. They say she will be a true companion for the children, but perfect for guarding the entire family. "Ojeriza" is the word that is used to describe the temperament toward strangers. It means "loathing of strangers."

Fourth note, “A three year old can be so amazed to speak to your missionary coworker in English only to find out that he has known English all along.” Now Aydan will only speak to Bro. Nash in English.

Thank you all so much for your prayers, love and support. We are encouraged so greatly by your continued letters and words of encouragement. This next month you can be in special prayer for Carlos and Debora, new souls interested in the Gospel, the continued growth of the congregation in Belo Jardim, the plunge in the dollar as it compares to the Brazilian currency, men to be trained for ministry here, our health needs as we change insurances to a plan here, and a piano. God bless each of you and we thank you.

...Because He first loved us,

Joel E. Dickens

Ps. 118:23

P.S. Thank you for your continued prayer support