

Dickens Digest Dec. 2021

Thanks and Giving Season

So I walked into the post office today and was almost immediately greeted by the security guard asking about the "Christmas" season. One reason is because I can go months without walking into the post office and always at this time I'm in there at least once a week because of more letters, cards and packages arriving for our family. Obviously we are constantly reminded of your prayers, love and support for our ministry and family. God is so good to bless us so richly. The second reason is because every year, around Christmas, Cynthia and the girls make cookies and we take a plate around as gifts and an opportunity to present the gospel. It allows an opportunity to deliver a tract and give out the gospel. I was also able to talk to him a little about our celebration of Christmas. I believe his question had more to do with how earlier and earlier it seems that the Christmas season appears in our lives. It's a perfect opportunity to show the difference between celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ over simply engaging in an overproduced humanistic celebration. Emphasizing our gratitude for what God did for us in giving us His only Son for our sins certainly is a wonderful way to celebrate,

not just now, but every day. We can celebrate by being thankful for all that God has given us these past couple months and what He is doing in the ministry here. In October, Children's Day is always celebrated and this year we had an event with nearly 80 people attending. Our folks did a great job in preparing and participating, and children and adults heard the gospel. In November I began helping a sister church with a new congregation in a city about 4 hours drive from here. This small congregation has great potential to become a church in the future. We also have a door opening to begin holding Bible studies with a family from a sister church moving to a neighboring city about an hour away. Here in Belo Jardim, our folks are continuing to return to the services and our attendance numbers are increasing. The Bible studies are producing results as a lady (Cristiane) made a profession of faith last month. She and her son attend services faithfully and were able to bring her husband as well. Please pray for these precious souls. The greatest gift we could imagine would be to see Sandoval come to Christ before Christmas! We give thanks for all that God gives, especially the gift of Jesus Christ!

Prayer Requests

- ◆ Morgan future and ministry
- ◆ Aydan and future plans
- ◆ Smothers family and ministry
- ◆ Guidance about building
- ◆ Evangelism Bible studies
- ◆ Discipleship of new converts
- ◆ Continued health
- ◆ Congregation in Soledade



In Other News

We can also give thanks for what the Lord is doing in our family and in the lives of the Smothers. God has blessed them with another child on the way and we are praying for the Lord to lead them in future ministry here in Brazil. In our own family, Morgan is praying for what the Lord wants for him in future ministry as he has been presented with a ministry opportunity in the States as he finishes his second full year of seminary. His professors (all pastors and missionaries) speak highly of his study habits and dedication to the ministry, and this past semester he has been the class president. He is a huge help in many ministries here and will be missed if the Lord calls him to return to the States. Aydan is finishing up his senior year of high school and considering what he will be doing in the future. Daniella and Abigail continue through their high school years and become more and more involved in the ministry every day. God has blessed and we continually praise Him!

In Her Words - Cynthia Dickens - 10 ways to neither lose nor allow anything to steal

your peace



After the prayer letter, in which I listed 10 things the Lord is teaching me about how to take advantage of and rest in His peace EVERY day, my husband has repeatedly requested that I elaborate on each point.

2. RUN to the Lord in prayer over everything

When witnessing and counseling, one of the statements that I've heard over and over is, "But I don't know HOW to pray." Said with sincere bewilderment, it has still been a hard statement for me to reconcile, thanks to a mama who taught me about prayer and how to pray. Some truths that I share with others are those that were lovingly

and confidently repeated throughout my childhood. "There is nothing too small to pray about." "God is never too busy to listen." "No matter where you are, run to Him in prayer." I believe that, when someone begins to grasp those truths, it will revolutionize their prayer habits. And as one's prayer habits change, prayer becomes no longer solely about a list (not that there's anything wrong with a list!) or about a crisis (and who doesn't go through those?!) or about how one feels or how many distractions there are. The Biblical admonition to never cease praying can become, not an impossible dream, but a way of life – a living, breathing connection with the only One who has the answer to absolutely Every. Single. Thing. I. May. Face.

----- "There is nothing too small to pray about."

Lost your keys when you're in a rush to leave the house? Pray while you look. Cannot remember some detail that you're sure was very important? Ask the Lord to refresh your memory. Have a brand-new, not-cheap string of Christmas lights on which one color randomly quit working, and live in Brazil where you cannot return such things? (Specific much? Weeeeeee!!! ... :D)

Talk to the Creator of electricity (and all scientific and technological concepts). I cannot even remember all the times that I've been "accused" of bringing on a snowstorm or influencing the outcome of a football game. LOL! Perhaps those things seem too inconsequential to pray about. Are you thinking, "Does God really care about a football game?!" Well, I don't believe He's pulling for a particular team, no. Does God prefer snowy weather over balmy sun? Absolutely not! He made and declared "very good" all of the weather patterns! But God does care about anything that I bring before Him, and He frequently delights in giving me things that I desire *when I pray for His will above mine*. You see, when His will is more important than my own, I can pray for that which I want while still acknowledging that my own desires may not be what He knows is best in any given situation. And I definitely want what He knows is best; my desires are nothing in comparison!

Since there is nothing too small to pray about, it goes without saying that there is, also, nothing too big for God to handle. Praying for anything, whether big or small, should be an exercise in submission to the will of God.

----- "God is never too busy to listen."

That's pretty straightforward, right? Should be, anyway. But how many times do we try to transfer our own human limitations to God? Just because we're crazy busy (and who isn't?), I think sometimes we assume that God, too, must have a little too much on His plate. When we stop and think about it, we know it's silly. After all, He's God – perfect in all His attributes – but I think sometimes it makes us feel a little better about our own hectic lives if we can convince ourselves that God is, also, stretching Himself thin to meet all of our needs and pay attention to all of our prayers. It helps me to remind myself that He is never rushed to hear me, that I can come leisurely or in a panic to climb into His lap, lay out what's on my mind and heart, and ... here's the most important part ... LEAVE everything for Him to control.

----- "No matter where you are, run to Him in prayer."

Like many kids raised in Christian families, ours were shocked the first time they realized that Daddy didn't actually close his eyes while praying and driving the car. We, as parents, work so hard to teach our children boundaries (as we should) that we sometimes forget to teach them the complete openness with which we should approach prayer. Nothing too small. Never too busy. No matter where you are ... the "where" in this statement could apply to a physical, emotional, or spiritual place. So where are you? Maybe not in a car, although it's not a bad habit to pray when you start out on the road. ;) Maybe you, like me, just find yourself wrapped in thoughts or concerns – maybe unable to sleep, maybe unable to focus, maybe unable to see anything but the worry. About 2 years ago, I was in such constant pain that I could barely sleep at night. I honestly didn't even realize that it was the pain keeping me awake – my body was so used to it that it didn't even register. I dozed and woke with regularity, my mind informing me that I ought to be well-rested but my body never getting there. But the Lord used that time to teach me more about how to pray. He used that time to help me form a habit that I'm thankful my half-conscious mind continues even today. During that time of little sleep, every time I woke up, I prayed for whatever came to mind (and my husband can testify to the fact that my mind does not turn off even in sleep!). Frequently, it was a person who was on my mind; sometimes a specific situation; sometimes an upcoming service, visit, or counseling session. From that starter prayer, it always progressed to other people and situations, until the Lord allowed me to sleep again. It wasn't/isn't burdensome. It was/is a marvelous comfort. God is always ready to hear and attend, no matter "where" you are.

As always, these are my personal experiences and are certainly not all-encompassing. There are a multitude of other things that have come to mind as I've been writing, and so many others have written and spoken on the subject of prayer far better than I ever could. But that's where I'm, once again, thankful for the way God deals with me on a personal level. He takes the unchanging truths of His Word and, through people and experiences, sets them before me in such a way that I "get it." So if these thoughts don't resonate with you, it won't offend me. :) But, I will be praying that you will run to God and His Word so that He can teach you about prayer (and help you take advantage of it) in exactly the way He knows YOU need.

Oh, and ... as of this moment, all colors on my Christmas lights are working. :D Answer to prayer? You know it!