

Dickens

Digest

October 2022

Politics and Culture

Sunday, October 30th is going to be election day here in Brazil. Brazilians will be choosing between two presidential candidates. Two things that can be difficult to navigate on the mission field are politics and culture. At this time it is inevitable that someone either in the church or with whom we have some friendship will ask, "who do you think is the better candidate?" "Do you vote here in Brazil?" Although we have a political position which would be considered conservative and we would certainly love to see politics head in a conservative direction, my response is almost always the same: "Every Christian needs to pray, examine each candidate and choose the candidate who is most aligned with Biblical principles." We could say that the same thing goes for culture. Culture is fine "if" it agrees with Biblical principles. The fact is that Biblical principles should guide every aspect of our lives independent of what our opinions, feelings or preferences happen to be. Please be in prayer for the elections here as the results will have impacts on the future ministries of many missionaries here in Brazil. September and October have

been busy with several events here in the church. I continue to help the new church plant in the city of Soledade and this small congregation needs prayer. The beginning of September took Morgan and me to Salvador for Bible Conference about Eschatology. Several churches were present and several pastors preached. Pastor Ray Haskett was the evening speaker and the entire event was a blessing to be a part of. Several Brazilians made professions of faith and God was glorified. Unfortunately on the way home the car broke down. October is always marked by Children's Day and we hold an event every year. This year we had a smaller crowd, but the encouraging thing was that our people organized the event and did a great job. A visiting family showed great interest in the Gospel and we are working on getting Bible studies started with the husband. The only way to effectively change culture and politics is to change hearts through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Prayer Requests

- ◆ Morgan future ministry
- ◆ Evangelism, discipleship in changing dynamics
- ◆ Church families/couples
- ◆ Church building decisions
- ◆ Training Center Project
- ◆ Lucas and family
- ◆ Smothers Family



In Other News

During the Bible conference in Salvador, our missionary colleague James Nash shared a project that he has been praying about starting in Petrolina. The Calvary Baptist Mission Training Center is being developed to help practically train Brazilian nationals as well as young missionaries who want to come to Brazil. Morgan is praying about helping in the development and training with Bro. Nash. We are helping in the planning and organization of the training center and we would ask that you all pray for this project and its future. Bible institute students need practical training and this project could be an asset to future church planting in Brazil and around the world. It could also be a help to young American missionaries who would like to intern on the field. The project is still in its initial stages and needs prayer, financial support, and organization. We are excited about the effect that this training center will have for the future of ministry here in Brazil.

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



4. To not neglect talking - to the right people, in the right way, at the right time

We have seen an alarming trend in the way Christians deal with their emotional and mental challenges. Instead of seeking Biblical counsel, many seek other outlets. Some turn to a psychiatrist, embracing the frequently humanistic philosophies they hear in such a setting. Others turn to friends or mere acquaintances, where they look to be justified in their own perspectives about a situation. In our world, this is seen most frequently on social media where it is not uncommon to see cryptic posts made, in which a (sometimes) unnamed offender is condemned or implicated, sometimes with the sly conclusion - IYKYK. In most cases, the poster seeks validation via the comments and likes. In the worst cases, verbal sparring breaks out in the comments and replies.

My spidey-sense can feel some of my readers' hackles rising. :) Please, note that I am not here condemning all help offered by mental health professionals. Nor am I vilifying Facebook, Twitter, or other social media. While there may be plenty about them that raise red flags for some, they are still tools - tools that may either be used in accordance with God's plan or ... not. THAT is what I'm highlighting here - God's plan and will for when, how, and to whom we should talk about issues in our lives.

When anxiety and stress dominate our lives, it is imperative that we find some way to deal with it. As I wrote about listening in the last article, it would behoove us to look at the other side of things - the talking - because it, too, is necessary. I have a child who is extremely introverted. Believe it or not, this child is nearly a carbon copy, personality-wise, of me AND of his grandpa; so I am intimately acquainted with the challenges and pitfalls that this child does and will face. One thing we train and talk about repeatedly is the necessity for communication. If we do not learn to communicate properly (Prov. 16:23), how can we hope for better relationships and diminished stress? You see, the wrong type, or even lack, of communication leads to amped-up stress and anxiety. (James 3:5)

Wow. As I consider this theme, it is daunting to try to put all that comes to mind in one little article! But I'll do my best to "sum up." :D

With whom should I talk? First choices ... my spouse, my pastor and his wife, other God-given authorities such as parents, Sunday School teachers, etc. While I know that not all of these choices are present in everyone's life, a pastor and his wife should be, at least! But though the specifics may differ for each person, please, notice that friends are not on the list. While Biblical friends WILL make the sometimes-hard choice to give Godly counsel, it is far more common to find friends that will simply take my side. Does that feel good? Soooo good. But it's not always what I need. I need to be willing to talk to those who love me enough to, yes, listen and then point my gaze to the truth of my situation via the Word of God. No matter how "strong" my walk with God is, I can always use another finger pointing me to Him.

When should I talk? Well, it's not as if I can give you an hour and time or even a "wait *THIS* long after a problem happens" time frame. "When" can, in a practical sense, come down to a variety of factors, such as parties involved, legal issues, details-still-pending, etc. But some general advice (to which there are still exceptions!) would include ... I should try to do the talking when I have come to a somewhat calm state of mind. Why? Simply put, so that I will be better prepared, after talking, to hear, recognize, and apply the Biblical counsel I so desperately need. Remember, there are exceptions! If there is a situation with which you need immediate help, do not avoid those counselors God has for you, just because you "don't want to bother" them.

How should I talk? This is not advice on your personality and manner of speaking. :) It has more to do with attitude and honesty. Be honest. I should talk openly to my God-given counselor about the details of the situation, about my feelings, about possible repercussions, about fears, etc.

Try to refrain from a constantly accusatory attitude. Again, these are general rules. I am aware that there are situations where the line between the accused and the victim is very sharply drawn. But, excluding those specific situations and focusing on the majority of life's difficulties ... if I ONLY accuse others, I show that I see myself as righteous and without room for improvement. This makes me less likely to accept any Biblical counsel given and proves that I only desire affirmation and sympathy.

Again, wow. So many other things come to mind with each point, but I'm trying to be brief!

So ...

Is it wrong to seek a mental health professional? Well, my most basic answer is ... ask your pastor. If he guides you to a psychologist (hopefully, a Christian counselor, and in my opinion, never a psychiatrist), then you would be wise to look into that.

Is it wrong to post about difficult things or to encourage others via social media? Of course not. But does your narrative or comment fit within God's guidance for communication? (See a few pertinent references below.)

Is it wrong to talk to my family or friends about my problems? Depends. Will their counsel align with Biblical principles? If not, it may be better to avoid such a discussion.

The first two items on this "keep your peace" list are still vital. Immerse yourself in God's Word, and pray. Pray, pray, pray. Ask God to direct you in the "whom," the "when," and the "how" of the very-needed talking that we all must do at times.

This article is IN NO WAY exhaustive - barely scratches the surface, to be honest. The subject is deep and, at times, divisive. However, to truly sum up ... Mere validation or sympathy (the giving or receiving thereof) should not direct my communication. God's Word should. Psalm 19:14; 141:3; Prov. 15:2; 21:23; 29:20; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; James 1:26; and so many more!