

Dickens

Digest

September 2023

Progress

How do we measure progress? Oxford Dictionary defines “progress” as “onward movement towards a destination.” Paul gives us an interesting definition in Philippians 3:14, “I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” In order to know what progress really looks like, we have to know what the goal is that God has given us.

Sometimes as a missionary you can look at others and make comparisons and wonder, “Am I really making progress?” Then God reminds us, “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” Our goal has always been to plant churches here in the northeast of Brazil. Progress may be measured in slow steps, but we praise the Lord that we can see it!

Since our last letter, our church attendance has been down because of sickness and cold weather, and some spiritual cooling on the part of some, but we have seen much progress in the Bible institutes and the training center project. April was marked by the men’s retreat where 80 men came together from 5 churches for a weekend of preaching, teaching and fellowship geared around helping the men grow in their Biblical leadership. I made a Bible institute trip to the interior and taught an institute class with the Bible institute in Salvador. In May, Morgan and I made a trip where I preached in the anniversary conference for a national pastor friend, and where

two precious men made professions of faith! What a joy to see those two men come to Christ! In June I took Daniella, Aydan and Abigail to a spiritual retreat with other churches. While there I taught about the dangers of pornography. In July I made another trip to the interior for Bible institute and taught 25 couples on the same information that I taught at the retreat. It is amazing how many Christians don’t pay attention to the dangers of sin. However, the day after the couples event, one young man came to me and said, “Last night after church, I sat down with my wife and we both decided together that there were some apps that we were deleting from our phones.” That’s progress. We celebrated Brazilian Father’s Day in August with a good group of men present including José (our security guard). Pray for his salvation as Aydan is doing weekly Bible studies with him. Now that winter has past and the rain is letting up, we expect to see our church attendance improve. Pray with us that in the coming months progress is made in the church here. Pray for God to call men because the work needs them. That would be the seeds of progress.



Prayer Requests

- Tia Lourdes and Dalia who recently made professions of faith.
- Spiritual renewal for some members of the church here in Belo Jardim
- New Bible studies and discipleship
- The Smothers Family in Teresina
- Morgan and the Training Center Project in Petrolina
- New church plant in Soledade



In Other News

As many of you know, Cynthia has been a type 1(juvenile) diabetic since she was a child. As this has presented her (and us indirectly) with health challenges over the course of her life and our ministry, I thought it might be nice to brag on God a little. In the last couple of years, she discovered that she has some intolerance issues with gluten, milk, eggs and especially acidic foods. This has complicated her blood sugar control and enjoyment, but once again we get to brag on God. God has given Cynthia the strength to continue handling all of her personal ministries which include the ladies ministries here as well as at least two individual weekly Bible studies. God gives her the ability to juggle these things and be an amazing wife and mother (even though sometimes we tire her out). God has given her wisdom to find food choices which are healthy AND she can enjoy. But perhaps the biggest brag is that recently, in her routine bloodwork she found out that she had one of the best long term blood sugar numbers that she has ever had. All of this in spite of the difficulties with the food allergies she has encountered. Our goal is to serve God here in Brazil for a long time and our health will have a lot to do with that as we age.

