

Dickens

Digest

June/July 2024

His Kingdom

Recently I participated in two Bible conferences. One was the anniversary of a sister church in another state. The other was a pastors/workers conference in one of the churches where we hold Bible institute. I taught at the first about the spiritual dangers of communism and in the other I got to just be challenged and encouraged. In



both, God helped to remind me that we are not here to build a kingdom for ourselves, because it's His kingdom and it's not of this world. Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." What a joy to know we get to participate as servants in His kingdom! What a relief to know that I am not responsible for its safety! What a challenge to remember that we are called to be faithful!

God has been blessing and working here in Brazil. Yes, we've had some lean times lately as some folks have allowed life challenges and sin to draw them away from church and the Lord. This causes us to have to work harder, but helps us remember that it's our job to sow the seed of the gospel, to teach and preach the Word of God without apology, and to live before our people according to the principles God has laid out. We

pray and depend upon God to give the increase. We baptized two young ladies this past month. One was Dália, a young teenager whose family found our church during Covid. The other was Daniella, our daughter. She realized she was not saved during the pandemic and took care of it then. João Pedro came to Christ back



in April and is growing in his new faith! He needs to be baptized, but has become my traveling companion on preaching trips. Emily came to Christ recently as well and she is being discipled so that she too can be baptized. I continue to help the new church plant in the state to our north and God has been blessing there as well with Camila coming to Christ. We also continue with Bible studies. God has opened the door to hold Bible studies online with some 10 people in a neighboring city. We are waiting on the Lord to show if he is opening a door there. Then recently, one of our men brought a couple to church who have shown a thirst to know the Bible. He has begun doing Bible studies with them. Please pray for Paulo and Margarida. They are beginning to understand their need for Christ! I continue to teach in the Bible institute in which Aydan and Daniella are studying. Please pray for God to call men into the harvest fields! Brazil needs leaders for churches!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Bible studies and reaching new people and places
- Pray for discipleship and development of leaders
- Pray for the church to find a permanent place
- Pray for Morgan and his internship
- Pray for Aydan, Daniella and Abigail in their studies



In Other News

God has been so good to our family! Morgan is busy with the work with CTMBC and we've even gotten a couple of surprise visits! The most recent was on our 25th wedding anniversary. The kids made a very special celebration for us, and part of the biggest blessing was Morgan getting to be home. God has been blessing his training and ministry in Petrolina. Aydan continues to study in the Bible Institute and has become my unofficial assistant. Daniella has fully embraced teaching our kids service on Saturday evenings and studies hard in the Bible Institute. She continues to pray about being able to study nursing. Abigail is a wonderful Sunday School teacher as she continues in high school. Cynthia has been teaching our ladies about how to be a Biblical woman in every area of their lives and has been helping train one of our dear members in leading the ladies group. Cynthia deals with her health on a daily basis, but never complains about it. Most people would not even know that she has her health issues. We praise the Lord for His protection for our family and we are so thankful for your prayers on behalf of our family and ministry!





Cynthia and I celebrate 25 years!



Youth service



Dália and Daniella

João Pedro - new convert and my traveling buddy



Daniella got to hang out with her Bible Institute friends!



Pr. James Nash, Chirlei and Morgan at CTMBC Inauguration



Daniella, Chirlei and Abigail enjoy the "close fellowship" when CTMBC came to visit.



CTMBC comes to visit and help reach souls in Belo Jardim.

Aydan, Kaiky, João Pedro and I on our way to Men's Bible Retreat!



Pastors trip to Serra da Capivara! What a place!

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In Her Words - Cynthia Dickens

#8. To not permit others' pity for my perceived hardships to make me pity myself

Both in the US and on the field, we frequently get questions regarding things that may require us to adapt (in a foreign culture) or may be hard to face. The churches and our family/friends who love and care for us want to know how best to pray for us. Others - maybe acquaintances or even strangers - marvel at how we could even consider living a life different than that in which we grew up. Here on the field, people wonder why we would leave what they consider to be an "ideal" life in the States; and they pity us for leaving family behind - a truly unfathomable choice, in their minds. The sympathetic looks, sorrowful tones of voice, and understanding opinions expressed are beautifully kind, caring, and supportive in every way; but if I'm not careful, it's awful easy to let those things cause me to pity myself.

Do we have health problems? Of course.

Is it stressful being far from family? Sure.

Does emotional pain while serving the Lord occasionally hit us like a ton of bricks? Without a doubt.

Are there times when we really wish we had a friend to talk to or maybe a few days to vacation together away from everyday pressures? Umm ... yeah.

Most of us could list our struggles all day long, and I'm not saying we should NOT have someone with whom we can share and cry. (Sharing with a Biblical confidante will always draw us closer to Christ; if those who make us feel "heard" are not pointing us back to Him, then we may need to reevaluate whether we really should share with them.) But our sin nature makes us innately selfish, so fighting against self-pity is something that most of us, also, struggle with; and self-pity can be one of the biggest peace-stealers. Please, note that "self-pity" doesn't mean that we're always sitting around wringing our hands and lamenting "Poor me!" No, self-pity can manifest itself in other, more subtle, ways.

- Always looking back at the "good old days"
- Needing constant affirmation or uplifting from others
- Thinking, "They couldn't possibly understand what I'm going through."
- Comparing myself with others

When I find any of these things creeping into my heart and attitude, it's a good indication that self-pity is vying for a foothold. As always, the best way to combat these tendencies is to look at what God's Word has to say ...

— Always looking back at the "good old days"

Ecclesiastes 7:10

Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Recognizing the beauty or successes of the past is not wrong, but constantly evaluating or criticizing the present circumstances based on the past is not sustainable. We should not forget the past; rather, we should take the lessons to be learned from it and work at pleasing our Savior even more with our today and tomorrows, regardless of what others choose.

— Needing constant affirmation or uplifting from others

John 12:42-43

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Knowing that we're valued and appreciated is really uplifting and appropriate in certain contexts; but when that becomes something I cannot live without and the presence or lack of such affirmations determines my emotional stability, then I'm idolizing myself.

— Thinking, "They couldn't possibly understand what I'm going through."

Romans 12:10

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Whether true or not - that another person cannot understand my situation - allowing such thoughts to dominate my mind shows a focus on self. I should work at, even in the midst of my own challenges, preferring others above myself.

— Comparing myself and my situation with others

II Cor. 10:12

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

This verse conveys a rather succinct message, wouldn't you say? None of us are worthy of being the measuring stick by which someone else is evaluated. Only God and His Word bear that distinction.

Life is hard, no matter where one lives or what circumstances God has allowed. May every aspect of life draw (sometimes DRIVE) me closer to Him rather than to regret and self-pity. Peace is not derived from others' sympathy and my own angst but IS derived from being settled in the care of the Shepherd. While there is no excuse for self-pity in His pastures, peace is abundant.