Giving THANKS

Thanksgiving! We LOVE the Thanksgiving holiday, even though, here in Brazil, we don’t get the day off, we don’t have extended family around and we probably won’t do a special meal.

Nevertheless, the fact that Thanksgiving is being celebrated in the U.S. reminds us each year of what the Lord has done for us and of the privilege we have of playing a small role in His kingdom work around the world.

So, how are you doing this Thanksgiving? We realize that times have been tough for a lot of folks this year, but there really is so much to be thankful for… so much that we even take for granted.

And we want you to have a few more reasons to give thanks this year… in this case, for what the Lord is doing here in Brazil and for your role in His work!

For example, there is Michele, a student I (Aïda) am discipling and a person who cannot be stopped when it comes to evangelism. Michele started with our evangelism classes at UFF last year. As a result, she started a weekly prayer meeting on her campus, uniting all the campus Christian groups (which, by the way, is not a very large number of students yet).

Along with Michele, some other 8-32 students and students from other Christian groups, Bill and I (Aïda) have done several campus outreaches this year right outside the main campus cafeteria.

Just recently - for Brazil’s “Day of the Dead” commemoration (Nov. 2) - we were able to present the gospel to over 200 students in a three-hour span. Groups of 3-10 students at the time, coming out of the “Bandejão” (i.e., cafeteria), would stop at our table to take the “Good Person” test to see if they were good by God’s standards and if they’ll be good enough to get into heaven someday. Since nobody who honestly answers the questions (which are based on the Ten Commandments) ever passes the test, we were able to share the gospel (i.e., God’s solution for their dilemma) with most who stopped by!

All together this year we have preached to and/or shared the gospel with over 2,000 college students!! Thank YOU for investing in Michele!

"What must we do to be saved?!” (André Orsi – part 1)

Take André as another example. When he started coming to our “biblical evangelism” classes on campus last year, we were worried about him. After each class he would send us long emails with many questions. First we wondered if he was even a true Christian, but then we realized that his questions were sincere and logical. You see, our emphasis on being as biblical in our evangelism as possible had challenged André’s long-held evangelism paradigms. In other words, we had rocked his world so much in this area that he had many questions that he needed us to answer.

One day André arrived for class and could not stop smiling. He told us that the rain that day had stopped him dead in his tracks as he was passing a sidewalk bar, so he decided to take cover. Suddenly he found himself among a bunch of guys who could not go anywhere either, just sitting there sipping their beers and conversing. It only took a minute for André to realize he had stumbled upon a divine appointment, and before he knew it he was preaching the biblical gospel to the entire bar! André said that five of the men paid very close attention, seemingly convicted of their sin; when he finished, each of the five wanted to know what to do to be saved! When he told them, all five literally fell on their knees – in that bar - and asked God to save them. Wow!

Thank YOU for investing in André!
8-32 and the Local Church (André Orsi – part 2)

It was not long after that Bill began discipling André. One day André asked Bill if 8-32 would be willing to train his Church. Bill assured him we would love to help, so André talked to his pastor and got his permission to hold The 8-32 Movement’s first Biblical Evangelism Seminar at his church. In addition to his church, we ended up training pastors and members of several other churches whom André’s pastor had invited — a total of about 65 people!

The next step was to train our own church. And guess who came to help teach and take our church’s members out to put their training into practice? You guessed it: André… plus five trained members of his church! Even André’s head pastor came and shared about the impact biblical evangelism was having on his church, not to mention on their city.

Since then André’s church has been going out weekly to reach schools, its neighborhood, jails and even cemeteries - to reach the living, that is! André has even started training other churches in his denomination. Again, thank YOU for investing in André.

"Hope" Hill?

And oh, yes! There’s one more reason to give thanks:

Bill and I head up evangelism in our church, and evangelism without “going out” is not evangelism. So we mapped out the “Hope Hill” favela (i.e., slum) right across the street from our church. However, there is not much hope on “Hope Hill.” It’s a mix of lower middle class and poor… and lots of drug trafficking. You have to walk up a big hill and, the higher you get, the worse it gets!!! A few weeks ago we headed up the hill, entered various homes by invitation, shared the gospel and walked back down. When we got to the bottom of the hill we met eight young men sitting near their motorcycles. They were very kind and respectful and, when Bill started to explain the gospel, there was dead silence. They listened so intently that we all stood amazed. As time went on we found out that one of them had almost died recently, and another (only 17 years old) had been told by a Christian friend that he would die in a motorcycle accident. Needless-to-say, he was scared. The Christian told him he needed to get right with God, but this teen didn’t know how. Meanwhile, residents of Hope Hill passed by and gave us the thumbs up. Only later did we discover that most of those eight guys are part of their community’s drug trafficking ring. Thank God for the opportunity to share the gospel with all. Thank YOU for investing in Brazil… putting hope back into places like “Hope Hill!”

So much to tell, BUT…

And there are so many other stories we could tell regarding Stefan, Charles, Bruno, Flávio, Luis, Ana, Brenda, Marlliny. Then there are some pretty incredible - not to mention some semi-scary stories - of taking the gospel to Rio’s annual “Gay Pride Parade” (Yes, we love to give students, church members and ourselves opportunities to share the gospel in many faith-stretching settings!) and of preaching the gospel daily in the busiest part of downtown Rio, but we will have to tell you face to face. Thank YOU, because even though we don’t celebrate Thanksgiving in Brazil, this year literally thousands of Brazilians are giving thanks for YOU!

From the bottom of our hearts we don’t know how to thank YOU and the Lord for the many blessings we have seen this year! It has been a great year so far, and your prayers and resources are making an incredible difference in our lives and thousands of others in Brazil… and now also in Uganda!!! THANK YOU, JESUS! AND THANK YOU, DEAR, FAITHFUL MINISTRY PARTNER! We’re in this together… storing up eternal treasures for the glory of God! Amen!

Together in the Harvest,

Aïda, Bill, Jessica & Amelia Hamilton