The Campus Ministry: How can we not give thanks?

Why? Because The B-32 Movement (or MB-32) has grown so much and the Lord has done such amazing things. The students are sharing their faith all the time, studying the Word and are about to go on our longest missions trip yet in January.

In partnership with our church here (Itapu First Baptist Church - IFBC), MB-32 is going to spread the gospel to what’s known as the Sertão (a very arid region in Northeast Brazil), which is considered the most spiritually and economically-impoverished region of the country. Due to the harsh climate, many men flee to the coastal cities to find work, leaving their families behind and often starting new ones in their new surroundings. Those who stay face a bleak future, earning sometimes as little as $6.00 a month (and rarely anything over $50/month!)

Meanwhile Catholicism - with its “works righteousness” (in violation of Eph. 2:8-9 and Rom. 1:17) - dominates the region, while only 5.5% of the population claims to be evangelical. And the men who stay often abuse the bottle, their wives and their children.

In the face of all this, plus so little money to leave, depression sets in and suicide - especially among women and youth - is unfortunately quite common!

Needless-to-say, these sertanejos (i.e., Sertão dwellers) need the saving and transforming power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 5:17)... ASAP! That’s why we’re going. Despite its poverty, a small Baptist mission church (see photo) of only 25 members in the town of Farias Brito, in the state of Ceará, is willing to feed and house our group of 30 for 11 days! We only have to get there - by plane - for around $500 round trip. I have asked two of our students - Daiane & Joanna - to take my place because I’ll be just finishing my sixth month of chemo. However, our group will be “roughing it” a bit too much for my weakened back and due to being so far from the nearest hospital.
I have breast cancer with metastasis to the bones in my back (hence the back pain). Stage 4 cancer, medically speaking, can’t be totally cured. The night I heard “the verdict,” the first thought that came to my mind was from the song “Awesome God” by Rich Mullins:

- Our God is an awesome God,
- He reigns from heaven above,
- With wisdom, power and love,
- Our God is an awesome God.

I sang this song in the quiet of my room while tears streamed down my face, having a smiling confidence in my Redeemer. Whatever He wants to do in my life is for HIS glory, and I want Him to be most glorified.

I never had seen the hand of a gracious God touch me in the ways He has touched me during this “challenge.” This is why I’m Giving Thanks for so many blessings:

- Giving Thanks for the community of our church and the reality of the local Body, which have been incredible. Not only did people visit daily, but they also prayed, sang songs read the Word, which so encouraged me. And when I got out of the hospital they cooked for me and my family and brought coconuts over daily (coconut water is recommended by my oncologist). I became totally dependent on Bill, our girls, my church family and the MB-32 students for everything. Poor Bill! He had to do all the grocery shopping, cook a little, do everything I used to do and still do ministry. He’s been exhausted since, but has never complained. I was rewarded how I need to be dependent on the Lord for everything.
- Giving Thanks for God sending me Cleone - a woman with a true servant heart - who came day and night, cooked, cleaned, made me eat, especially during the first two months of chemo when everything had a metallic taste and when I kept losing weight. (I lost almost 30 pounds, but have gained 10 back.). Cleone still comes even though I can do almost everything now.
- Giving Thanks for the students from our ministry, who came by and cooked, prayed, made me laugh, cleaned up, washed dishes. During my hospitalization we even held two weekly meetings in my room! The nurses thought I was famous because I had so many visitors dropping in: our laughing had them worried at one point, however, wondering, “What in the world are they doing to Aïda in there?”
- Giving Thanks for the way the Lord is using my chemotherapy to allow me to share Christ every week in the “chemo” room and for how He has used my chemo to make me feel so much better. I’m driving again, cleaning, cooking and have gone back on campus as well. I’m able to teach Sunday School and even gave a couple of talks, which I love to do, to the women at a baby shower and to our youth group (about investing one’s life in eternal things).
- Giving Thanks for my sister Ingrid, a United Airlines flight attendant, who has made at least two trips each month to visit me and bring me some needed things (like wigs!); also, I’m giving thanks for her colleagues who, although not knowing me, have been trading their “Rio trips” with Ingrid so that she can “kill two birds…” and visit me while working. How this illness has drawn my family closer!
- Giving Thanks for my former disciples from Trinidad & Tobago, Maggie and Christobel, who visited me at different times early on in my treatment when I was pretty much flat on my back and could barely eat. They had the patience of Job! Maggie spent her entire vacation here, and Christobel was here serving me for 10 days. They are or were missionaries with Cru, having served with us on the campuses here in Rio a number of years ago.
- Giving Thanks for the daily prayer chains set up on my behalf, which are still going on even this day.
- Giving Thanks for my Brazilian “Mom” and “family” who have visited me weekly, bringing food for “afternoon teas” - a Brazilian custom which I hadn’t known much about before, but became a regular event due to having visitors daily in the later afternoon. I’m giving thanks for their prayers and the “expensive” goodies they brought me so that I would eat something.
- Giving Thanks for learning to really live everyday as if it’s the last one (because it could easily be), glorifying the Lord, resting more than ever (I’ve got limits now), ministering in the lives of everyone the Lord puts on my path, enjoying the Lord, His Word and praying and reading a lot more!

How can I not give thanks? (cont.)

Both students are from very poor families (one is a member of a very small church - only 8 members - and her mother is a maid; the other qualifies for living and eating on campus for free), so I’m asking you to prayerfully consider helping send these wonderful girls in my place with an additional gift in December of $25, $50, $100 or whatever God places on your heart. I’m trying to raise $1,500 because Bill, of course, will be going as well.