

Brothers, Pray for us...  
1Thess. 5:25

I can't tell you how many times I've taught from Romans 12 and used the thought there that we each have a skill set that we can use for the kingdom. What strikes me is that, even though I've taught it, I've never really applied it to myself in that sense. I've always just been a teacher of the gospel in that text. Now, I realize that Paul is talking to some there about the gifts that were given to some in the Roman churches through the laying on of the apostles hands, so please don't go off thinking that I'm saying that I'm some kind of gifted teacher. Ha! I know better than that. Not only are all of the apostles physically dead (and their hands with them), but many of you have heard me teach (haha!). Richard Rogers used to say, "What the apostles had by inspiration, we have by perspiration."

What I would say of myself is that I have a willingness to do that job of teaching. Specifically the bible. A willingness to perspire, so to say. So I teach.

I would also say that I have a willingness to live in Brazil, consistently far from my family, culture, and society. I eat food, participate in cultural rituals and teach using parables that aren't natively mine. I struggle to understand the rationale that Brazilians have for doing things the way they do them. The logic is different, the morality (can you call it that?) is different, the language is different. My home is not even my own. I am far from the bones of my people Jacob might say. Which can be especially troubling during the November and December holidays. But I've learned to be flexible and live in this context. Actually, I love it. So I am a sojourner.

A bible teaching sojourner. I am a missionary. And by God's grace through you I can be that.

But I need to be more than that. I think that is the nature of what Paul was getting at. How can I use what I naturally have for the kingdom? Well that's easy. Among other things, I already teach in the body.

How can I use what talents I naturally have to serve the sinner condemned to an eternity in hell? That's why I'm here after all isn't it? (I know that isn't politically correct, but I need to face the truth that anyone not in the church has an appointment with that destiny. That's why Jesus had to die, right?) What can I do? I can teach the word, but only if there is a connection, a venue, or a reason for them to want to listen. So again what can I do?

I can teach English. I almost hate saying that because it wasn't my forte in school. But it's true. I have something that almost every person I know wants; they want to speak my language. Thank goodness it's not grammar. Surprisingly enough they almost all have 3 or 4 years of English grammar, they just don't know how to speak. So I teach conversational English for free. And I'm not talking about using the "Let's start Talking" material. Not that I have anything against it.

Even though I was initially reluctant to "waste" my time getting involved teaching English last June, it has really evolved into something very, very useful to build relationships with so that I have "earned the right" to share the gospel.

This is where I come to the fine point of what I want to share with you in this newsletter. In the midst of my other bible studies, I have now developed three English study groups with lots of new friends. And that is what is so frustrating.

For the last year I have really poured my entire life into lots of people with very little return. I actually taught the group out in bairro Bugio (sometimes as many as 26 people) the story of God's plan to save man culminating with the resurrection of Jesus and the preaching of Peter at Pentecost. We examined carefully the response of faith commanded by Jesus and taught by all of the apostles.

No response. Three weeks have passed and no response.

And that is my FRUSTRATION!!! It's not that I'm hoping to throw up a bunch of pictures of baptisms, although that would be nice. Really, I want these people to be baptized into Christ because they are my friends. I want them to be saved because I love them. And that love sometimes just makes me want to shake them and say, "Hey, don't you understand what the word is saying here?"

I am your missionary, such as I am, here in Aracaju, Brazil doing what you can't be here to do. I know that many of you would love to be here serving these people, but jobs, family, age, or ability or some other thing makes that impossible.

So here it is. Something so hugely earth shattering that makes you intimately involved with me in the streets, homes, and schools in Aracaju. This is my sole (soul) request of you for the following month. I need you to pray, maybe like you've never prayed before, that God would shake up these people's lives in some way so as to make them receptive to the message.

Praying is not the pre-cursor to the work, it is the work. Pray with me.

Watching the Son rise in Aracaju

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