

The Lecture Hall of Luciano

.... He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Acts 19:9

It's 7:00 in the evening and it's still hovering around 85° tonight, there's no wind and I can feel the sweat trickling down my back. Luciano and I are eating together in front of his school. A piping hot pastel filled with ground meat and green peas, dripping with hot cooking oil with an ice cold coke. Very Brazilian. Not that I would dream of complaining, I know what a sacrifice this is for him - but I do know that I'm going to need a Sonrisal (Brazilian Alka-Seltzer) before the night's done.

That's when he breaks the news. The overhead fan is broken. Now I'm really starting to sweat and wish that I had worn shorts like he told me to tonight. In thirty minutes I'm going to scale the stairs into the loft where he has a large classroom with rows of computers and crt's generating and blowing out hot air.

As many of you probably remember, I've been teaching a weekly citizenship / English class at his school in bairro Bugio since early March. This is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Aracaju, and I teach there for free. Through that class and several opportune bible studies, Luciano, the director/owner of the school, has made some big changes to his operations.

He is no longer accepting funds from the local politician who has used his school for political purposes and Luciano's students to do his canvassing. The way it worked is that Luciano received some direct funding and then some large generous contributions from the public treasury in the form of "scholarships" for the students. The catch was the promise of votes and using the school as a base of operations for campaigning. Basically a vote buying scheme that Luciano and his school have been tied up in for the last 4 years.

As a direct result of his decision to stop accepting the politician's money, Luciano has a lot more freedom and control over his school and he has invited me to teach bible classes to his students on Friday nights. So, on September 4th, we started studying the story of God's plan to save men beginning in Genesis 1 and working our way through to the resurrection of Christ.

This is a great study. In the last four weeks we've done an overview of God's promises in Genesis. I try to stay on task, but there are always questions about this or that. It should have only taken us two weeks to get where we are at, but I think that would be an American audience. There is just so much ignorance of some of the basic events of Genesis and lots of assumptions that you just can't make. Everything from the reason for the trees in the garden of Eden, that Eve was not the forbidden fruit, what does it mean to call on the name of the Lord, why make sacrifices, and my most embarrassingly favorite - "what is circumcision?" That was a doozy to explain with a mixed audience of old and young, male and female.

I really, really have enjoyed this class. To be honest with you, it's the highlight of

the week for me. And that is saying a lot. I have some other one-on-one studies running in parallel that are pretty exciting for me too, but there's just something about teaching to a hungry group. Basically it's the same group of students that I have for the English class :

Luciano Santos Souza - (39) the director of the school; Francisco Jose - (56) whom I introduced to you last month, and a real driving force behind getting this class started; Davi and Paulo Silva dos Santos - two brothers (15 and 17) that have their hearts set on studying law and medicine and need English to get them into the right schools - I talked to them about God's law in the old testament being the foundation of western law and the fact that Luke in the New Testament was a physician and that God never asks anyone to have faith without reason; Gleibson Isaias de Almeida - (26) a waiter at an international restaurant and deacon in a Pentacostal group whom I met at the bus stop one evening and invited him to come up and study English with us - he didn't even know that the OT and the NT were the same story; Jessica de Souza Silva and Pamella Thayonny de Silva - (both 16) best friends and studying information technology who just got caught up in the class on Fridays (some of my best students too!); Luana and Savio da Silva - (29 and 24) a couple married 3 years that just begged Luciano and me to start the class on the bible, a really sweet couple; Joyer de Souza Silva and his daughter - (64 and 15ish?) strong catholic who gets into some disagreements with me sometimes about bible stories until we read them right from scripture. To that end, I have borrowed a phrase from Randy: "Deixe a bíblia Falar" - or "Let the bible speak."

Admittedly poor and not the best educated, all and all they are really wonderful people. Very clean, well mannered, eager to learn, they welcome me like part of their community and the word of God is taking root among them.

Best of all, this neighborhood fits squarely between Jardim Centenario and Santos Dumont where some of our brothers live. I'd really like you to keep these people in your prayers as well as our brothers Jean and Keli Lemos dos Santos who live in the same area. Jean's new house is just too small to meet in, even for Brazilians. That and he's been pretty discouraged because he has to work from 6 to 6 on Sundays and Keli is too scared to take the baby alone across town to where we meet. We're looking at renting an empty garage or abandoned store so we can all meet together on Sunday nights.

We keep planting, watering and praying for the harvest. Thank you for the privilege. Watching the Son rise in Aracaju - rob

Ladies Retreat 2009

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Prov. 31:30

This month we held our second ladies retreat here in the state of Sergipe. This event was organized by women from several congregations here in Sergipe and we had 38 women attend. Our speaker was Renata Diniz from down South of Brazil. She did an amazing job. I was very impressed with her lessons. Our theme was Ambassadors for Christ.

We opted again this year to have our ladies retreat last only one day, but we had a very uplifting time and I believe that everyone left encouraged. Renata stayed here in Aracaju for 3 more weeks after the retreat ministering to women here.

The women meet together for an area-wide women's devotional 4 times per year to promote relationships and unity among the congregations here in Sergipe. This is the first year we have done this and it has been very well received. Keep our women's events in your prayers. Thank-you for your faithfulness!! I love you all,
Marie