

# Dickens Digest December 2024

## Gratefully Rowing

1 Corinthians 4:1

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Every semester for the last four or five years, I have been privileged to teach a 2-3 week course in the Bible Institute with which we work and in which 3 of our children have or are studying. Last month I taught 1 Corinthians and was reminded about how it is simply my job to “row, row, row the boat”. The Greek word for “minister” in the above verse is the word used for the slaves under the deck of the ship who rowed to make the ship move. Jesus is the captain! I get to row the boat! We are so thankful as we look back over this past year and look forward to the upcoming Christmas season and next year. God has been gracious and good to us and we are reminded of all the other “rowers” like you all who are constantly praying for us and financially sacrificing so that we can continue “rowing” the boat here in Brazil.



Every time I get to teach the Word of God, whether that is in a big Bible conference or to a single family in a Bible study, more “rowing”

is taking place.

It has been a busy few months traveling for Bible conference in Salvador in September, preaching in a family camp in October and participating in the ordination of the national pastor in a church in a neighboring city with whom we have worked for several years. Almost every month since July, I have been making trips to Petrolina (almost 7 hour drive) to help with the establishment of the CTMBC (Calvary Baptist Ministry Training Center). This is where Morgan is interning and working with James Nash and we are excited to see that the Lord has provided land for the training center. I would encourage any pastor with young people interested in Brazil to consider looking into the training center. Here in the church plant in Belo Jardim, we have seen increased attendance and some families who have fallen away have demonstrated interest in returning.

I mentioned Paulo and Margarida in our last update. Well, Cynthia and I visited with them about a month ago and after presenting once again the Gospel, Margarida simply said, “I need that! I need to give my life to Jesus!” Cynthia and I agreed that her prayer of confession of faith was one of the sweetest we have ever heard. Makes all the “rowing” worth it! A Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to each of you!



## 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

As a family, we are all doing well. Cynthia has been able to finally get some routine doctor visits taken care of which is always a challenge. Her health is ever a need

for prayer although she doesn't complain. She just continues “rowing” as she assists me with the ministries, especially where the ladies are concerned. She also has the big responsibility in helping Abigail get her high school finished up. Our children are such an essential part of our ministry and I have often



said that there is no need to choose between family and church. The family should be in the church and the church should be in the family. Aydan has recently begun handling the music here in the

church and has made a couple trips with me recently for the Bible conference in September and helping with CTMBC. Daniella has begun a baking “side hustle” to help pay for her Bible institute and has become Cynthia's right hand where helping take care of the house is concerned. You can be praying specifically for each of our children and their futures. Please continue to pray for Cynthia and her health. Please pray for the church here in Belo Jardim. We have money stateside set aside for construction from sweet donations from churches. We would like to either build or use that money to purchase a building. Your prayers, sacrifices, offerings and sweet notes and cards are always a blessing to this missionary family!





Ordination service for Pr. Josiel!



Pastors present for ordination



Talking to kids at a local school about the dangers of Halloween

Abigail made apple pie for Thanksgiving



Ordination counsel for Pr. Josiel



Our group at the Bible conference in Salvador



Working on the property of CTMBC to help get it ready



Families of the church getting together for Children's Day

Pastors and wives fellowship



Preaching at Family camp for national pastor colleague

**Personal Contact:**  
Joel & Cynthia Dickens  
CP 139  
Belo Jardim, PE 55155-970  
prjoel619@gmail.com  
(804)451-1327 - Skype  
+55 (81)98299-9177 - Whatsapp

**Sending Church:**  
Roanoke Island Baptist Church  
Pastor Scott Baxley  
1234 Hwy 64/264  
Manteo, NC 27954  
(252)473-2892  
www.ribaptist.com

**Mission Agency:**  
World Wide New Testament  
Baptist Missions  
PO Box 725  
Kings Mountain, NC 28086  
info@wwntbm.com  
www.wwntbm.com  
(704)730-1440

## In Her Words - Cynthia Dickens

#9. To be calmly and firmly SURE of God's leading (by fellowship with Him, and by godly counsel from authority) so that others' approval or disapproval neither sways nor discomfits me.

Maybe I'm the exception, but one thing that can really set me on edge is uncertainty. This is, undoubtedly, part of my personality and human preferences, as I know many other people who thrive on "flying by the seat of their pants." Although, I can appreciate the advantages of being able to adapt in that way, it is not a tolerance that I naturally have! To be honest, many things come to mind here about my need to be flexible within the plans and interruptions that God has for me; but that's not really the point here, so I will refrain ...

Anyway, when uncertainty rears its ugly head, "peaceful" is the last word I'd use to describe my mental state. Usually, both my days and nights are plagued by cerebral gymnastics attempting to work out an acceptable resolution to the discombobulation. Then, when a decision is reached, it's way-too-common for me to (for a variety of reasons) second-guess things, thereby creating another tidal wave of unease and angst. The number of times I can vividly recall the above scenario playing out in my own life is shameful, especially when I consider the simplicity of that which brings true peace.

Although there are myriad questions associated with uncertainty, the only one that really bears answering is, simply put, "Am I following God and the truth of His Word?" BTW, don't let anyone convince you that God's Word does not address a particular subject, decision, or issue that you may face. :) Of course, in order to be led by and to follow someone, it really helps to have an intimate relationship with Him. This takes us back to points one and two on the "How to keep your peace" list - those reminding me to not neglect my daily time in God's Word AND in prayer. Because there will always be circumstances, people, and factors that create uncertainty regarding my decisions, the only way to be calmly and firmly sure of God's leading is by having close fellowship with Him. As has been mentioned in previous prayer letters, there is nothing wrong - rather everything right - with having godly counselors. The caution here is to be careful to seek counsel from those who are Biblically ordained to give it. Your pastor and his wife, your parents, or other Biblical authority in your life are some examples. Your peers, extended family, friends, and co-workers while not necessarily bad counselors should not (truly, CANNOT be) your guiding light. In short, every bit of counsel you receive must not be contrary in any way to the Word of God. Be careful of any counsel based on reasoning aligned with "the end justifies the means." This includes things like:

"What other choice do I have?" (Jer. 21:8 - I have two choices: God's way of life, or any other way of death.)

"I don't see any other way out." (II Sam. 22:33 - The perfect way is God's way.)

"God understands." (Jer. 17:9-10; Gal. 6:7-9 - God does understand; but what He understands includes that about ourselves and our motives which, frequently, we don't want to face or even admit to ourselves.)

Following God is always best, even if it is not evident to my human logic and foresight. Foresight? HA! As if my own predictions of the future could begin to compare to God's omniscience! He has proven Himself capable of leading me to places far beyond what I could have imagined for myself. There is peace in following Him. When I find rest in that, others' critiques or my own uncertainty are quelled under the commanding, assuring, soothing voice of the Shepherd saying, "Follow me."