

# Dickens Digest

July/August 2025

## Legacy

The above picture is a painting on the wall of a canyon in a park in the deep interior of Brazil that I visited a year ago.

Archaeologists say that it comes from the first peoples who lived in the Americas some 10,000 years or more ago. Problem is that they can't explain why it looks like a cross. Perhaps they were here much more recently and were trying to communicate something important.

Recently the Lord has been teaching me about "legacy". "... Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

(James 2:23) What a legacy! In 2011 I met Marjorie Browning. She had been a missionary in the deep interior of Brazil for 51 years at that time. In 2014 she was killed by a young man whom she had taught in Sunday School when he was a child. In 2019 a documentary was made about her life (you can find it on YouTube). Since then we have wanted to dub it into Portuguese for the Brazilians to be able to appreciate. With the existence of AI we have finally been able to do it. In a week it has had over 7,000 views, but the more wonderful thing is the comments from the Brazilians who were impacted by her life and ministry. The fact is that all of the "ministry" that we are doing may seem sometimes like it can be tedious or without grand results like we would like to see, but the "legacy" is what will be there when the Lord calls us home.

So as a missionary it is our desire to have an impact not just for today, but for eternity. April ended with the visit of the MacAvoys and the men's retreat. We had 86 men from 4 states here in the northeast. Many of the men said it was the best one yet! We had 8 men from the church here! The results of the young people making trips with me is that they are getting more and more excited about serving the Lord! This has become an encouragement for the entire church and our services, especially on Sunday, have become much better. We have seen visitors with regularity and the people have grown in their fellowship with one another. Along with that, I have been involved a little more with the training center as more infrastructure is being added. In June I had the privilege of having a part of a pastor's and worker's conference in the interior where John Kokenzie and I taught the pastors, workers and their wives. There were some 100 pastors, workers and their wives as well as single Christian workers. God worked mightily and we were all encouraged by the time together in the Word. This month of July ended with a visit from Jeremy (general director of WWNTBM) and Esther Lockhart, a dear couple from our mission who were missionaries here in Brazil! God is working in the hearts of our people. Above all things our prayer is that the legacy left after our ministry is eternal and that we were faithful and brought glory to God!

## Prayer Requests

- Pray for visitors and new converts
- 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
- Pray for Cynthia and her health

## In Other News

One of the cool things about having young adults in the house is how it has helped our young people in the church. The desire of Aydan, Daniella and Abigail to serve the Lord has encouraged the other young people in the church to do the same. It all really started with the original trip to the training center where Morgan is interning. It continued with an evangelistic trip to Petrolina and the training center. This grew even more when we took them to a sister church for their anniversary conference. This has generated the seeds of something that we are praying will grow into a lasting vision of reaching souls for Christ and a stronger church. Please continue to pray for the young people and the families here in Belo Jardim. While these spiritual blessings are appearing, Cynthia has been having ups and downs with her health. She has especially been having increased and chronic pain in her lower neck and right arm. We believe it is some sort of nerve pain, but trying to get her exams and doctor visits scheduled has been challenging. We are praying for some answers soon. Morgan continues to do well in his internship and has become a bit of a "shepherd" as the small herd of sheep at the training center have been "lambing" and at least two have had to be bottle fed. We love getting the pics and videos of the lambs! That's not all though as they have been having souls saved in the Bible studies of the training center in Petrolina! The ministry continues and God has been protecting and blessing our family! Thank you for your prayers!







The group of guys from our church at Men's Retreat!



Translating for Pr. MacAvoy at Men's Retreat.



Official photo of Men's Retreat!



Worship service at Men's Retreat!



Marjorie Browning served in Brazil for 55 years and touched thousands of lives in the interior of Brazil!



Pr. and Mrs. MacAvoy made an "investment" in our young people!



Mother's Day dinner!



Couples dinner with Jeremy and Esther Lockhart!



What a joy to have Jeremy and Esther with us. Jeremy preached in Portuguese and our people were blessed!

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## In Her Words - Cynthia Dickens with an intro from Joel

I (Joel) was given the great challenge in June to teach 3 sessions for the wives and single women at the pastors and workers conference in the interior. To say I was nervous was an understatement. Although I prepared lessons, I felt that perhaps it would be most effective to record an interview with Julie Kokenzie and show it to the ladies as well as publish some of the articles that Cynthia has written. I was blessed at how many of the women were grateful for the written material that we gave them. Much of it was articles like this one that Cynthia has written. So here is another one...

### WHAT IS YOUR BIBLE?

Listening to a TV show rewatch/commentary podcast recently, I was struck by how, in nearly every podcast the host gushed over how they love, love, LOVE the episode being discussed. My mind scoffed, "How can you love every episode that way?" In a split second I remembered other specific interactions in which someone I know raved (raves) about how they love a particular chapter or verse in their daily Bible reading. And they say it nearly every time they talk about a Bible passage. Some would say, "How can you love every chapter that way?" Although it may seem suspiciously repetitive to some, it's clear to me that it is genuine and real excitement in that person's mind and life over the Word of God. Then it struck me that what I was hearing in the rewatch podcast was evidence of what that host values and desires in their own life. It brought me sadness to think of that TV show being the host's "bible"; but that line of thought quickly took me to the reality that so many people are loving, desiring, and following "bibles" that will never return their love, never fulfill their desires, and never lead them to complete happiness. Maybe it is a philosophy, an entertainer, politics, a TV/movie/book storyline, financial success, an online influencer, sports, family unity ... and the list could go on, with the point being that any number of things in our lives can become our bible.

Of course, it is not that all of the things listed are wrong, as long as they influence us within the guidelines of what God in THE Bible designates as right.

- \* Is my focus on wise financial choices failing to take into account God's bottom line?
- \* Do my political views cause me to offend others in ways that the Bible clearly shows should be avoided?
- \* Is my devotion to a sports team or to a sport, in general, keeping me from attendance to or participation in godly activities that would benefit me and/or my family far more than physical activity would?
- \* Have I allowed TikTok or Instagram content to become my guiding light even, perhaps, without realizing it? (It is so easy for worldly philosophies - some even disguised as "Christian" - to infiltrate our minds!)
- \* Am I so consumed with fostering unity in my family that I am willing to neglect and sacrifice my own (or their) unity / relationship / walk with God?

The answer to all of these questions SHOULD BE "no!" However, upon honest evaluation, it becomes truly startling to see how far many professing Christians have drifted from the Bible's clarity to the nebulous haze of "That's divisive!" and "God loves me like I am!"

So ... what is your Bible?

Whatever you find yourself moment-by-moment consulting mentally (or physically) - content which you love, which gives you "all the feels," which causes you to pause and reflect, which influences your attitudes and behavior - THAT is your bible.

And I posit that there can really be only one (i.e. that we cannot have multiple bibles); because ultimately, everything in our lives must be subject to something. Will it be to a bible of my own design? Or the only Bible - the Word of God that will never lead me to the wrong behavior, attitude, or conclusion? May I allow God's Word, THE Bible, to divide (Heb. 4:12) according to what He knows is needed in my life; and may it be in THE Bible that I recognize both God's love for me and His desire to change me (Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 3:18) from who I am naturally into His image.