



March 2008

Pack Your Purse with PRAYERFULNESS

Feature: "Praying for the Lost"

Decorate for St. Patrick's Day - anything green: shamrocks, pots of gold, rainbows, and/or clover (clover represents the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Hand out Hershey's Pot of Gold chocolates as favors. Invite the women to come to a casual dinner of Irish Beef Stew (you can find the recipe on the Internet) and talk about the story of St. Patrick and his passion for reaching the lost of Ireland (you can find out more about St. Patrick at the following website:

www.historychannel.com/exhibits/stpatricksdays/main.html).

Discuss the country of focus for this month, Brazil, and pray that God would raise up many more "St. Patrick's" who have a passion to reach the lost of this country.

Outreach Idea:

Using your church's prayer list, write notes of encouragement to those listed. Pray for them throughout the month, and let them know you care. Offer to take a meal or drop off muffins or cookies for a treat.

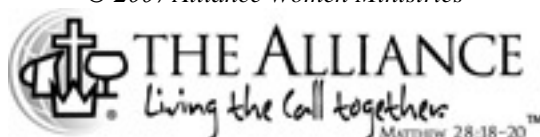
Prayer Tip:

Pray that each of us would see the urgency to pray. Pray that we would make our devotional life purposeful, and not routine, relational and not just habitual. Pray that we would hunger to deepen our walk with the Lord. Pray that we would not just gain knowledge, but that we would experience renewal in our heart.

Discipleship Thought:

God does not put us here on earth so that we can enjoy it, but He places us here with a mission and a responsibility. Our mission and responsibility is to help other people see the Father. Jesus said that we are to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." We need to shine so that people can see Christ in us (Matt. 5:13-16).

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Good to Go in Brazil

Elaine Okasawara: A heart being molded in the Hand of God

By Helen White

Elaine and her husband, Marcelo, have set their hearts on the Lord so that they may abound in every good work. They are members of the Vila Madalena Church in the western section of the city of Sao Paulo, a city of 18 million people. They have purposed in their hearts to be ready to go, as they engage in the World. They have a call to ministry, and specifically, to the indigenous people of the Amazon basin area of Brazil. However, today their world is primarily in Sao Paulo and the ministry God has called them to in the local church. As they wait, God is developing attitudes in their lives that will give them strength as they move on to another location.



Elaine was called to become a missionary at a missionary conference in October of 2001, when her fiancé (at the time), was out fishing. In her heart, her response to the Lord was very clear: yes, but she said to him, "Lord you see the ring on my hand, soon I will be married. I know that you can make this call just as real and personal to Marcelo so that we can follow your lead together."

Before their wedding, Andre & Tania Souza came to the Vila Madalena church and spoke of their ministry in the Amazon basin. They invited anyone interested in participating in a mission's trip to their village to contact them. Marcelo took great interest in this invitation, and soon Marcelo and Elaine were working together with others in preparation for the mission's trip. They were married in April of 2002. The team that went to the basin learned a lot about ministry, and was stretched spiritually. Even as they left the Amazon, Marcelo had not experienced a clear call. But, a week later, he had a clear moving in his heart and knew that he was called to become a missionary. Immediately, he took action and began what he thought would be a two year course in Bible and ministry. The urgency was great upon his heart and he wanted to go in less than three years. But their preparation to go would take more time to be fully equipped when they left for the Amazon basin.

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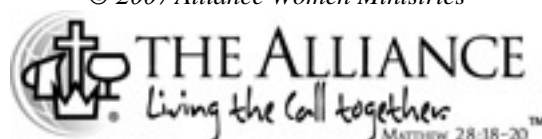
Marcelo's pastors spoke to him and said that they wanted him to be licensed as a minister with the Brazilian Alliance church before he is sent to minister with the Brazilian mission group, MEVA (Evangelical Mission of the Amazon). That meant Marcelo had to agree to complete the full four year course of study at the Alliance Bible College in Sao Paulo. Marcelo graduated from the school in December of 2006. He has now begun the one year internship in his home church to complete his requirements of ministry to be licensed by the Brazilian Church.

God had some other experiences in life and ministry for them to live before they were to leave. Marcelo was a business partner with his two brothers in a very profitable business. When Marcelo came to Christ just months before their wedding, he started to hear the voice of the Spirit telling him that certain practices of their company were not pleasing to the Lord. The income was great, but both Marcelo and Elaine were eager to have him leave the partnership so that he no longer would be asked to do unethical practices that are widely practiced by companies desiring greater earnings in Brazil. His family, Japanese by decent, and one to highly value family cooperation, did not understand his position, but over time they agreed, and he was freed from the partnership. Today, they live on less, but have joy in what they do.

Elaine, the oldest child, felt great pressure from her family to continue working in the family insurance business, even more so since her mother is a widow. Her mom has worked there for years, but always depended on Elaine's leadership in the job, for this income, and for her general emotional support. Even though it was difficult, Elaine and Marcelo talked this over with her mother, explaining the necessary transition of responsibility that would be coming to free Elaine to leave and live her missionary calling. For Marcelo's family, who still don't know the Lord, their understanding is clouded because of their lack of eternal hope. Yet, Marcelo and Elaine have been firm in preparing their families for this major transition.

In 2005, Marcelo and Elaine, were willing to put their future support base at risk to help send out a family already prepared to go. Andre and Tania Souza, due to some circumstances, needed a home church to be their base for sending them out again with MEVA to reach the Wai Wai people. They spoke the language and had already ministered there, but were without the support base they needed. Marcelo and Elaine did not hesitate in enabling and encouraging the Vila Madalena church to take on this couple for a year before they would be sent out to the Wai Wai people of the Amazon basin. The Vila Madalena Church contributes about US \$1,200 (monthly) or 13.5% of its combined regular and mission's offerings to support the Souza family. By human logic, Marcelo and Elaine had just ruined their future support base for their ministry and calling, but they counted this all as joy for the sake of Christ. They joyfully helped all of this come together and this reflects their resolute heart in doing all they can to send out the Word to those in need.

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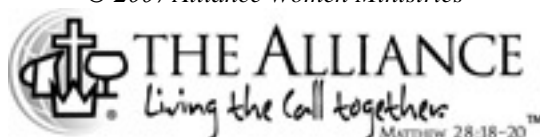
Elaine and Marcelo knew that the Brazilian government agency, FUNAI, that protects the indigenous people of the nation, has become increasingly strict about allowing ministers of the gospel of Christ to live among the indigenous people. They felt it would be wise, since Marcelo's qualifications for going would be based on his theological studies, that Elaine prepare in some specific health related area. They consulted MEVA (the mission board) and found that one area that would be very helpful was a course as a laboratory technician, specializing in basic exams, such as blood tests to determine if the patient has malaria. Elaine always had an interest in microscopes and a desire for learning about health related subjects. Elaine and Marcelo again went to their pastor and asked him for his direction in this matter. Elaine had been taking courses at the Bible School, but would need to stop those to take this technical course. Elaine had already met the MEVA requirements for preparation for a married woman. Their pastor confirmed that it would be very wise for her to take this course, as the FUNAI finds it difficult to adequately help the indigenous people as they suffer from frequent bouts with malaria. This would enable Elaine to help with a quick diagnosis for the needy people of the Amazon jungle. Elaine finished the course work in 2006 and will do an internship after the birth of their twins.

If Marcelo and Elaine had left quickly for the mission field, they would not have had a child. They had repeatedly asked for prayer and anointing for their desire to have a child, but God had responded . . . wait. Over the last two years, Elaine's medical needs and difficulties to get pregnant were diagnosed. God gave them a gift, the costly medical treatment to enable Elaine to get pregnant was given to her by her Obstetrician. Today, they await the birth of their twins, Clara and Filipe, a girl and a boy (due in June, but likely arrival in May 2007). A dream of Elaine's youth was to have twins, a boy and a girl. God's hand has been upon her thus far in the pregnancy.

Since their wedding, when they ministered in teaching to the Jr. High kids, Elaine took most of the leadership in directing the Bible Study. When Marcelo taught, he would consult her frequently and she influenced the outcome of the study. Today, with her increased tiredness due to the pregnancy and Marcelo's new opportunities to minister in the Vila Madalena church, Elaine has been learning the importance of keeping quiet and praying. It is a continuing challenge to her, but one she is seeing the importance of. Elaine grew up in the church, but Marcelo did not come to Christ until 2001 at an Alliance church retreat. Elaine has gifts in teaching. In all of this, she is learning to rest--even when she thinks about a possible weakness or error that may come up in Marcelo's ministry. She is certain that God will meet Marcelo as he ministers and is at peace.

In so many areas, Elaine has seen how the verse is so true for her heart and life over the last six years: "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). Initially, Elaine and Marcelo felt so compelled by the urgency to go to the indigenous people that they were frustrated by some of the steps they needed to take to reach their goal. Today they have a deep peace at seeing, knowing and living the presence of the Lord in a very real and personal way as they finish off their preparation to go. They know that for today, God is calling them to live and minister as faithful

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servants, and soon, when they go to the indigenous people of Brazil, God will have built into their lives what they need to go and engage in a new setting. Their Pastor, Kurt Baselides, said they are a couple with unlimited willingness to serve in any manner and ministry in the church!



Afterthought: Elaine told me that one of the things that she has begun to do in ministry more is to teach. She is helping to teach the Adult S.S. class and also is invited many times to speak at the monthly Brazilian Alliance Women's meeting (UFM.) Elaine participated in the recent Alliance Women's retreat last October.

The Alliance churches in Brazil have five missionary units that they support. There are about 14 organized (C&MA) ACEMBRAS churches and several congregations that provide a large portion of the support for these families. If you want to see the ACEMBRAS mission's site, go to:
<http://www.dmalianca.com.br>.

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