

Good morning!

My name is Peter Armati and this is my wife Nice Armati.

Many of you know who we are, but for those of you who don't, I'd like to tell you that we have been missionaries in Brazil for the last three years in our retirement and that we were commissioned by St James. Nice, my wife, is Brazilian and our ministry is done in Portuguese. Nice was brought up in Mirassol. She knows the culture and the language as only a native speaker can.

We work in the township of Mirassol which has a population of about 60,000 people and also in the nearby city of Rio Preto that has half a million people. Mirassol is 600 Kms from the Atlantic coast and 450 Kms from the capital of the state of São Paulo, called São Paulo which is arguably the largest city in the Americas with over 20 million people.

I am here now to tell all of you a little bit about the work we have been doing.

First of all, let me tell you what an incredible experience this has been for us; to see the power of God at work in front of our very eyes. In the first few months after starting our work, we were blessed with two conversions. We started with Bible studies to a group of people and these conversions were fruit from those studies.

We have also been blessed with another type of work, amongst cancer patients. They live temporarily in a respite home in Rio Preto and come from all over Brazil. We visit them every week and study the scriptures with them. On average about 12 people

attend our meetings each week. Sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on how well or unwell they feel at the time. These meetings have been an awesome experience. It is wonderful to see the Holy Spirit at work in Nice and in those attending the meeting.

We meet every Thursday night for about an hour or so and although we have not witnessed a conversion amongst these people yet, we are very sure that God is working in these people's hearts and that when they go to their rooms to sleep after our meeting, they are communicating with God. We have been distributing bibles to them and most of them ask for additional copies to take home to their family and friends.

We have been nurturing the two conversions that we had at the beginning of our ministry and they are growing in their Christian walk and becoming mature in their faith. So much so that they themselves are beginning to teach their friends and family about Jesus.

Nice also ministers to one person in Rio de Janeiro. Nice and she get together from time to time to study the scriptures. This person too is beginning to put her trust in Jesus.

We have formed a relationship with the Reformed Anglican Church of Brazil and have visited Bishop Josep Rossello a couple of times in his home. This church is theologically similar to the Anglican church in Sydney. However, it is very small (about 26 small home churches around Brazil with maybe 600 people attending regularly). But they have the true gospel, which they preach. Unfortunately for us, their nearest church is 2 hours away from us in Mirassol, and it would mean we would need to take two days off to go to church there one evening!

We lead a home church of 8 -10 people, meeting every month for worship and communion – in an informal liturgy format. Our friend Teresa leads a weekly bible study with 3 other people, under our supervision. Nice leads bible study with a couple of people using Skype over the internet.

This is the good news about our work! Unfortunately we have to take the good with the bad, and as in everything else in life, there is also a bad side, that we have to tell you about.

We have been actively looking for a church to be attached to, but so far we haven't found any that teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Protestant churches in Brazil are called Evangelical churches and most of these Evangelical churches are only interested in, literally, ripping people off. Teaching their congregations the so-called Prosperity theology.

Malachi 3:10-12 is a favourite text for sermons... and it says “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... [And I will] pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it”. Meanwhile, the preachers keep getting richer and richer, displaying their own wealth, buying imported cars etc..

We offered to teach the Bible in one church, but we not allowed to do so. The minister was very suspicious. He wanted us to be a member of his church and to baptise us. We believe he felt threatened. We had already been sharing the Bible with four of his church members for a number of weeks. But now, that had to stop.

We have had other rejections along the way from individual people, either because they are too busy managing their own life their way, or simply because they don't want to get out of their comfort zone. They worship anything and everything - like

worshipping Mary and the Saints, and the Spirits. They also practice lite-Black magic and many favour New Age thinking.

We have tried to spread the gospel in a couple of Universities by way of offering Bible Study in English so that they could improve their English oral language skills, but we had no response.

The good thing that has come out of this rejection is that we have come to understand that we need to be attuned to God, and follow His leading.

It is only human to have our own plans, and to try to do things proudly, in our own strength. We are learning **not** to do this, but to wait on Him with patience and humility. Not that we should sit idly by, waiting. Rather, that everything we plan to do needs prayer and serious listening to God's response.

We are always alert for opportunities to share the gospel, which frequently occur in surprising situations.

You may not appreciate how powerful and just how wonderful your support is, for us and for the work God is doing through us. We thank those of you who are supporting us, with prayers and financially, from the bottom of our hearts. In this way you are partners in the gospel, with us there in Mirassol. We are really grateful for your support.

So, to conclude, we pray that you will continue to support us in this endeavour. If you are not yet a partner in the gospel with us, we ask that you seriously consider partnering with us

Or...

Have **you** ever considered being a missionary yourself, in gratitude to God for what He has given us at great cost to Himself? It is a wonderful work!

I leave you with the words of a great hymn....

*My Lord and God, you are so rich in mercy;
Mere words alone are not sufficient thanks.
So take my life: transform, renew and change me;
That I might be a living sacrifice.*

Amen