

## Peter's sermon for Mission Sunday 4 July 2010

It is a great privilege to speak to you today about the whys and wherefores of Nice's and my imminent departure from Australia, to help to share the gospel in Brazil.

There is no doubt that there is a great need to share the gospel in Mirassol. Mirassol has a population of around 55,000 people. Turramurra's population is around 10,000. I imagine there are quite a few Christians living in Turramurra..... Nice and I know at least 100! But in Mirassol, we only know of one Christian, our sister in Christ, Teresa, who is a recent conversion to Christianity (by mail and email!).

There are many churches in Mirassol: maybe 30. But it is our experience that they do not preach the gospel, but rather they focus on earthly things, like how to get great wealth (for themselves), and there is a focus on evil, demons and Satan. Voodoo, spiritism and New Age thinking are also prevalent, and there is obvious idolatry - worshipping the saints, money, power and possessions. Whilst there are a number of our acquaintances there whose "good works" are very visible, there is little sign of the Christian behaviour that we read about as the fruit of the Spirit; "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control". We remember what Jesus said: "by their fruit you shall know them".

**That's the bad news.** However there is very good news that we want to share with you today.

Each time we have returned to visit Mirassol, many people have asked Nice and me about Jesus. We have been presented with opportunities to talk about Jesus so many times that we have lost count. The Holy Spirit has been very active each time we have been in Mirassol, bringing people to us. There is a real hunger amongst the people we have met, to know more about Jesus. When we talk about what we know will happen to us when we die, their eyes open up wide, like white saucers!

We are very sure that God will raise up many people to hear the gospel when we are living there, and that a good number of them will eventually become Christians. This is our prayer. **And we ask that this be your prayer also.**

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Instead of retiring to live out our days at the end of our working lives, we plan to work with God in spreading the gospel in the region of Mirassol, and doing our utmost to live Christ-like lives! We pray that our lives will shine out in the darkness there, like stars, and that we will bring glory to God.

We have given many years of prayerful thought to what is the best way to share our faith in Mirassol. We are no longer spring chickens, and we do not have the strength or resources of a young couple. However what we lack in physical stamina, we believe we more that make up for that weakness, with spiritual wisdom and experience, and we have a passion to serve God. We have concluded that we ourselves will not be able to take care of the many widows and orphans, the destitute and other greatly disadvantaged people. But it is our prayer that

the new Christians who we believe God will bring to us, can be led to help these poor people and the outcast.

The idea of establishing a **church** in Mirassol is greatly discredited. The local churches are ripping off the people, and we do not want to be seen to be yet another one of **them**. We have decided to model what we do in Mirassol on the early church that we read about in Acts chapters 1 and 2, especially Acts 2:42-47.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

We plan with God's help to establish home churches (each one with about seven regular members). As these people will speak Portuguese, Nice will be the pre-dominant leader of these home churches. As my Portuguese develops, I will be able to contribute directly.

There will be a need to select and build up home group leaders to have a correct knowledge of God, the Bible, a sound theology, and so on. We will need to teach them, resource them and support them to continue the work as we get older.

We also plan to establish English speaking groups of University Students (predominantly in Rio Preto - a nearby city of 420,000 people). We will encourage the group members to practice their English in conversation around the Bible. A University notice-board advertisement might read "**Practice your English, Investigate Christianity, Grow as a Christian: Hear a Great Message, enjoy Great food and have Great fun!**". There are six Universities in Rio Preto and one in Mirassol. Nice and I will be able to use our English with these groups.

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What drives us to want to do this work, when we could be enjoying whatever remains of the rest of our lives, with family and friends? The answer is surprisingly simple - because of God's amazing grace to us!

We love Jesus; and this is a grateful response to his suffering and death for **our sins: our sins have all been forgiven!** - and all the sins of the people in Mirassol and Rio Preto can also be forgiven if they repent and believe in Jesus' saving death for them, and live regenerated lives! What an amazing Saviour!

Jesus commands us to tell **all** people, in **all** places about the gospel, and we want to do what he wants us to do; because we love Him!

Because we love Jesus, we want to proclaim the gospel to **all** people! Passionately!

Because we love Jesus, we want to live out Christ's love to **all** people, in **all** places.

And why is it that we love Jesus so much?

It is our grateful **response** to his **incredible love** for us. For we, who have been forgiven **soooo** much, love much!

God has called Nice and me to this mission work in Brazil. It is our prayer that **you too** will prayerfully consider what good things our Lord has planned for **you to do**, and that you will respond positively to the amazing Grace He has lavished upon **you!**

Let us pray

*Lord Jesus -*

*We thank you for your Word;  
and for the Truth of Your Word.*

*We thank You that it is by Your grace that we have been saved, through faith, (and this faith also is not from ourselves; it, too, is a gift to us); not by any "good works" of ours, so that no one can boast.*

*For we are Your Father's masterpiece. He has created us **anew** in You, Lord Jesus, so that we can do the good things that **He has planned**, long ago, **for us to do**. Amen*

# Mission Sunday - St James 4 July 2010

Sermon outline for all four services at St James

## The need

1. The general environment in Mirassol
2. Churches in the region
  - o The false gospels being taught in the region [especially a focus on wealth and the devil]
  - o Spiritism, witchcraft and New Age
  - o Mormon missionaries in the dusty streets of Mirassol (!)
  - o Idolatry [saints, money, power and possessions].
3. The spiritual environment
4. Many people asking us about Jesus – and listening to the answer!
5. "What will happen to me when I die?" is a major point of connection.

## The plan

1. Instead of retiring to live out our days at the end of our working lives, we plan to work with God in spreading the gospel in the region of Mirassol, [and doing our utmost to live Christ-like lives!]
2. Churches there are discredited: so church plants are not the answer.
3. House churches (Acts 1-2) suggest a solution (especially Acts 2:42-47).
4. Prayer and Bible Study groups in people's homes = Nice
5. English conversation for Uni Students in student's homes = Peter and Nice
6. Find ways to seek out and help the poor, sick and destitute (Matthew 25:31-46) = group
7. Build up house group leaders to have a correct knowledge of God, the Bible, theology, etc. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Resource them and support them to continue the work as we get older.

## Why do it?

1. God's amazing grace!
2. Love for Jesus => in grateful response to his death for our sins: our sins have been forgiven (Luke 7:36-50, Luke 15:11-32) - they can also be forgiven if they repent and believe, (and live regenerated lives!)
3. Love for Jesus => Jesus commands us to do so (Matthew 28:16-20, John 20:21-23)
4. Love for Jesus => proclaim the gospel
5. Love for Jesus => love for all people, everywhere (Luke 10:25-37)
6. Love for Jesus => in grateful response to his love for us.