

# Brazil News



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Editorializing

## Respect

Respect—true respect—is not a mere social grace. Respect is a mirror that reflects the contents of the soul. It is possible to be unpolished and yet be deeply respectful. Inversely, an unconscious attempt can be made to cover deep disrespect with a heavy coat of politeness.

Respect is a way of life, not a garment we put on when occasion demands it. Respect is a seamless robe that covers the entire body. Respect does not come in trousers and coat, or in skirt and blouse. A man—a woman—cannot be partially respectful, for the soul cannot be divided.

Yet we are humans. Often we are disrespectful, even while our intentions are to be respectful. Aware of this, we decided to dedicate three Wednesday evening Bible Studies to this subject. As teacher of one of the classes, I quickly jotted down some topics to be discussed that evening (twenty-two, to be exact; we discussed only five). They are in no particular sequence and we will discuss them in the order they came to mind:

**Respect for life.** Life—human life—is very precious. Each life has been handcrafted by the Creator. The aberrations, the deformations, the repulsiveness of some of His creatures cause us to guiltily wonder if maybe He wasn't on duty "the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." Yet, knowing God makes no mistakes, we assuage our misgivings by attributing what we see to the curse of sin. And certainly, if it weren't for sin, there would be no imperfection.

It is not our calling to seek out the headwaters of these imperfections. But it *is* our calling and highest duty to respect the sacredness of life. As medical science probes deeper and deeper into the mysteries of early life and is able to detect serious defects

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IS THE KEY



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within the first weeks of existence, we must never, never heed their suggestion, or insistence, that that life should be terminated. Life, all life, is sacred and merits our tender respect.

**Respect for the elderly.** Some years ago READER'S DIGEST published a story written by a reporter, an attractive young lady, who visited a number of stores and made small purchases. The workers almost stumbled over themselves for the chance of waiting on her.

The young lady went home and disguised herself to look like an old woman. Then she returned to the same stores, once again to make small purchases. The same workers who a short time before had so willingly waited on her, now paid scant attention to the "old woman."

Growing old is part of God's plan. Aches and pains, memory lapses, brittle bones, fragile lungs, weakened heart muscles, are all part of this plan. He knows that if He would permit us to go through life at full throttle, feeling and looking like early middle-age folks until the end, we wouldn't be able to balance life with death. We would continually prepare for life, but not for death.

As we understand that the aged are in God's plan just as much as we are—teenagers, young men and women, or middle aged—we will understand that very soon we too, if God grants us life, will be where they are. The way we see and treat the aged today, is very likely the way we will be seen and treated when we are aged.

This should do more than simply behoove us to be more tolerant of the aged, to be more kind and understanding. If we treat them well merely because we want to be treated well in our old-age, we have missed the point. We should treasure the aged. We should learn from them. We should ask them, "Grandpa, how were things when you were a boy?" "Grandma, when you were a girl, what kind of temptations did you face?" "Uncle, at what age did you get converted?" There are thousands of questions to be asked. Ask them while they can be answered.

One of my greatest treasures I possess today is the intimacy I shared with my grandparents, with my great-grandmother. Some of my most beautiful lessons in life were learned from them.

Respect for our elders is an obligation only when we are too self-centered to see it as a privilege. He who despises this privilege is covering with thorns the way over which he will someday have to walk.

**Respect for the sacred.** Magazines are loaded with jokes about heaven and hell, about God, St. Peter and the Bible. Often these jokes have a backdrop of immorality. Businessmen attempt to buddy up to us with "religious" jokes.

And we laugh when we hear or read them.

Oh, shame! Double shame!

Never should we laugh at a joke that makes the Savior weep. It may not always be expedient to reprove a worldly man for having told an inappropriate joke, but we certainly should never laugh or show any amusement. Our silence will be a powerful witness.

God forbid that we ever repeat such a joke.

**Respect for the ministry.** There can be no ministry without ministers. Thus, respect for the ministry means respect for the ministers. This isn't always easy. They are human and sometimes they say and do things that are very human. We remember the pre-election instructions given in grave tones, the scriptures read; we remember the ordination sermons. We place all these qualifications on one plate and the servant on the other. Then we stand back to see if the scale is balancing.

Our mortal reasoning tells us it isn't. So we make a point of setting the servant straight. Or maybe we give him the silent treatment. We tell ourselves we believe in the ministry, but not in that particular minister. If David would have believed that way, King Saul would have suffered the same fate in the cave that Goliath suffered on the plain.

If our respect for ministers is contingent on their perfection, then our own sanctity must be above reproach. Thus we set for them and ourselves an unattainable standard. We do not respect our ministry because of their perfection, but in spite of their imperfection.

**Respect for authority.** Respect for authority is rapidly becoming a museum piece. Reporters maliciously pounce on any tidbits of information that could possibly begrime public officials and launch them into the heavens like so many roman candles for everyone to see. This, it is said, is freedom of press.

The people of God must be very careful of what they believe, and much more careful of what they say. It is easy to mingle with the crowd that calls for the king's head, but it takes courage to quietly point out benefits we are receiving from his reign.

Respect for authority includes the local cop who at times seems to take his duties too seriously. Make friends with him. (He probably doesn't have many.) Invite him over for a meal. (You may be surprised by what you find behind his badge.)

**Respect for strangers.** We enjoy stories about people who entertained angels unawares. Yet when we have the chance, all too often we look the other way.

Some strangers can be dangerous. But so can driving down the Interstate. (And to be perfectly honest, a lot more of our people have been killed on Interstates than by strangers.)

Who are strangers? Once in a while they come to church. They work in stores. They sit at the table next to ours in the restaurant. We meet them in airports. And in rest areas. Sometimes they knock on our door. Or even ask for work.

The first rule in meeting a stranger is: Remember he has a soul.

The second is: No matter what his appearance, remember that he may be inwardly crying for help.

The third is: Remember that you may be face to face with an angel.

The fourth rule is: Share with him whatever you have to share. Often it will only be a word. A smile. Sometimes it may be materially. However it is, when you part ways with that stranger, may *he* feel that he has met an angel.

**Respect for the sanctuary.** In the time of the children of Israel, the temple, which included the sanctuary, was probably the most sacred place on earth. David lovingly speaks of going into the sanctuary of the Lord, a quiet, holy place.

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We would like to believe there is no connection between the old sanctuary and the present church where we worship. Maybe there isn't.

And maybe there is.

In the old sanctuary, God met with His people in a special way. This is also true of our present church. Yes, we believe God meets with us at home, as we rest and as we labor. But—and this we cannot deny—the present day sanctuary continues to be the place where God meets His people collectively. That may be in a mud hut, a wood or masonry structure, and it may be in an immense sports arena which has been rented for this purpose. Be it where it may, if that is where God meets His people, then it is a sacred place.

Decidedly, the sanctuary in which we meet to worship is a sacred place and deserves reverence.

We have a fairly good record and tradition for respecting the sanctuary *during* the service. The problem is *before* and *after*. We have developed a mentality by which the sanctuary becomes holy only five to 10 minutes after the song leader arises to lead the opening song (time for stragglers to hurry in) and loses its holiness immediately after the final Amen (when the sacred atmosphere is soon dissipated by a crescent Babel of voices that all too often aren't even remotely related to the spirit of the meeting).

We say that our church building is no more sacred than any other building. True. The Sports Arena in Wichita with its ice rink floor would hardly be called a holy place. Yet, when God's people fill that building to deliberate, fellowship and worship, it becomes just as holy as Solomon's temple.

**Respect for our schools.** Only eternity will reveal the comprehensive value of our own schools. They can be compared to the crossing of the Red Sea or of the Jordan River. Our schools delivered our children from outstretched hands that would have placed them squarely in the middle of the road to destruction. Our schools are a miracle. And period.

Why is it so hard to pay school tax?

Why don't some pay at all?

Why is it so hard to get brethren to occasionally come for devotions?

Why do some parents unreflectively lay added burdens on the teachers and board members?

Why do some board members slump in a corner, thus making others work overtime?

Why must teachers deal with unruly children and get no help from the parents, possibly only criticism?

**Respect for the privacy of others.** It is said that every man's house is a castle. While this concept can be taken to an extreme, the great truth remains that home should have an element of seclusion, because people need privacy.

We are a close-knit people, a characteristic that we should always treasure. But possibly because of this, and certainly because of our human nature, we have lost entirely too much of our respect for the privacy of others. Our school children have an exercise called Show and Tell. Their parents have an exercise called Pry and Tell.

This is not merely an unfortunate little trait that we have developed. It is a deplorable

trait, a calamitous trait that has helped edge all too many brothers and sisters outside the walls of Zion.

The practice of prying and telling can be compared to the thorns that choke out the good seed in the parable of the sower. Pharisaiically, those most adept at prying and telling clothe themselves in long robes of “concern.”

Pry and tell. Why not pray and help?

**Respect for the ideas of others.** Ideas are personal property. We wouldn't even consider going to our neighbor and hauling his lawnmower to the junk because we can't see how it could ever work. But how many times don't we consign his ideas to the junk?

Ideas love company. Alas, all too often our ideas become our idols. We believe that our ideas are best suited to make the cogs of progress turn efficiently. This happens in the home, in committees, at work, in school...everyplace. Our selfish nature deceives us.

Blessed are those who have a humble nature and understand that when ideas are shared, often a new idea emerges for which no one can take credit. Good ideas shared spawn better ideas. The Almighty must be pleased when He sees His children sitting together in brotherly love, sharing their ideas, willing to give preference to those of others. Such a person, such a committee, such a group, such a church, will prosper.

**Respect for nature.** Nature is the handiwork of God. Blessed is the man, the woman, the child, who can see the reflection of God in nature. How beautiful when a child comes running to mother and exclaims, “Mom, come see what I found on the mulberry tree.” Mother goes and sees little son or daughter has found a cocoon. Right there mother gives a quick lesson how the cocoon was made, what it has in it, and how that a butterfly will eventually emerge. Thereafter, mother and son or daughter daily go out to check the cocoon. That child will begin to look for other miracles of nature. And see the reflection of God.

The idea that because animals don't have souls they can be beaten, tortured or heedlessly killed, does not show strong character. Neither does picking a rose to pieces and throwing the petals on the ground. Or tearing a cocoon apart to see what is inside.

The story is told of two young boys who entertained themselves by catching frogs and cutting out their tongues. When these two boys grew to manhood and married, their children were born with speech defects.

Adults who believe they are above hunting laws because they are Christians, who believe that animals protected by federal law can be destroyed because they are a nuisance, are in reality constituting themselves legislators and judges. (When such a one is called before authorities to give an account for infractions committed, it is difficult to leave a positive witness.)

**Respect for the underprivileged and impaired.** Those of us who lead normal lives often find it difficult to empathize with those who are less fortunate. This is especially true of those who live in developed nations with vigorous economies in which government programs have taken the underprivileged and impaired under their wings. This can, and often does, create a sensation of detachment.

God loves everyone alike, but if He should have a special little corner in His heart

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for certain ones, I believe it would be for these helpless lambs who so often are at the mercy of others and must live in an atmosphere of rejection.

May we never despise these “little ones” whose happiness depends on the mercy and kindness of others.

**Respect for the clock (of others).** Most of us wear a watch. We have clocks on our walls, on our desks and dressers. Our microwave ovens and other appliances have clocks. Our cars and trucks have clocks. Clocks everywhere.

There are those nostalgic souls who would abolish clocks and live like people lived during the greater share of history. Unless one is willing to move to the jungles of New Zealand or the Amazon Basin, such regression is hardly possible. For better or for worse, we are children of the clock. Our ability to respect the clock will affect all areas of our life.

While working at Hesston Manufacturing (and then Corporation) I spent time on all three shifts. I soon found I could tell how long it would be until quitting time by watching who was coming in for the next shift.

Thirty minutes before shift change, there would always be a man or two coming in—always the same ones.

Twenty-five minutes and there would be more—again the same ones.

Twenty minutes, fifteen minutes... pretty much the same ones.

Ten minutes, and there would be a flood of men coming in.

Five minutes. These would have a harried look as they rushed in.

And then, just as the buzzer sounded, there would be several more. The same ones.

Through the years I have watched this and concluded that habitually being on time, or late, has very little to do with one's occupation, social position or wealth.

It's a habit.

It's a habit.

It's a habit.

I have also noticed that those who come early are relaxed.

Those who come at the last minute are stressed.

And those who come late are detached.

When we are late, someone must wait.

Sometimes when we are late, a number of people must wait. On a five-man committee, if one man is 10 minutes late, 50 man minutes have been wasted.

When our dentist has to wait 15 minutes for us to show up for our appointment, he/she is losing money, for he/she only makes money while working.

We challenge those who can't seem to keep up with the clock. Break the habit and you will discover it is easier to meet your appointments 15 minutes ahead of time than it is presently to arrive five minutes late.

**Respect for the fallen.** This is not a pleasant subject. There are those who have fallen, those who have turned their back on that which we consider most precious. In some cases we are moved to a deep pity and concern. But in others, depending on what has transpired, this feeling may not come so easy. When we see those who audaciously take on the ways of the world—sometimes throwing themselves to the wind in a way that even the world finds strange—we...well, we lose our respect for them. They know

it, and no matter how assertive they may appear, it hurts them. And worse, we lose our ability to witness to them. And that, good reader, is a loss we can't afford.

**Respect for perverted humanity.** The level of perversion in any civilized nation is directly proportional to its standard of living. That makes absolutely no sense, but facts are facts. Where is perversion more widespread than in Holland, France, Sweden, Germany...? (We refrain from mentioning a fifth nation that would touch the tender feelings of some of the readers of this little paper.)

The apostle tells us that "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." What would he say today, when the exact sins to which he made reference—and maybe others even worse—are impudently practiced on the housetop and announced to the four corners of the earth for all to see, hear and know?

As we walk the streets today, we come upon nauseous, disgusting, revolting acts being practiced in broad daylight. And then there are those who not only live in perversion, but teach and show. We wonder how the Almighty refrains from striking them with leprosy or sending fire from heaven to purge the earth of such refuse.

But he doesn't. And there is a reason. He loves them. That is the reason we too must love and respect them. We can be absolutely sure that behind their bold front there is a great emptiness, a desperate cry. We have no idea how to help such souls, but as we walk past them we can say a silent prayer. It's not likely any doors will open, but if they do, we must be ready.

**Respect for those who don't show respect.** This is a tough one. Especially when the chronically disrespectful one is a family member, a brother or sister in the faith, or a co-worker. The first rule to remember is that the disrespectful one probably doesn't see him/herself in the same light as others. Thus, on the positive side, such a one may not be making a deliberate attempt to give others a free ride down the sink drain.

There are several approaches that can be taken in the case of a chronically disrespectful one:

1. Remember that love covers a multitude of "disrespects."
2. When knowing you will be in the presence of such a person, prepare yourself. Pray for grace to return respect for disrespect.

3. When there is opportunity, talk to the person about his/her problem. However—and this is very important—do not do this unless your own spirit is totally at rest. If your admonition is an attempt to right a personal grievance, let someone else do the reproof. But, if you feel your spirit is right, attempt to show the person what his/her behavior is doing to others.



"Have a seat and we'll discuss your concern about my lack of respect."

**Respect for creditors (especially brethren).** A creditor is a creditor, and needs to be respected. It doesn't matter if he has loaned you five dollars or five hundred thousand dollars. Until that debt is paid off you are a debtor. And debtors can't be choosy.

If you simply can't manage to respect your creditor, pay him off and *then* be disrespectful.

Our creditor should be respected not only while we owe him, but afterwards too. Think of that before you ask for a loan.

To disrespect a creditor shows a serious character flaw. It doesn't matter how rich he is, or how much he doesn't need the money, or, indeed, if he has forgotten that you owe him, you must show respect. If Bill Gates loans you ten dollars, you should speak well of Microsoft and use Windows on your computer. That's the long and the short of it.

Alas, at times we seem to feel a greater responsibility toward our banker than we do toward a brother. No, brotherly love does not cover a multitude of debts, *unless* the creditor brother himself proposes to cancel the debt as a personal favor. For such a creditor, respect should be forever doubled.

**Respect on the road.** If the Wilderness would have been cut into sections and crisscrossed with Interstates, and if the Israelites would have driven Fords and Chevys and Hondas, the Law given to Moses would doubtlessly have devoted at least one chapter to traffic.

But for donkeys and oxen, that was hardly necessary. The New Testament is equally silent on the subject. And so, without a set of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt nots," we reluctantly accept the rules and penalties set forth by frail human legislators.

When we drive down the highway at night and the oncoming driver gives us bright lights, we feel justified in giving him a dose of his own medicine, even though this increases the danger of a serious accident.

When someone edges us off the road, we feel better if we can vocally or gesticulatively show our indignation (if not ire).

There are so many situations on the road in which our non-resistance doctrine is tested. But because we don't know the offending driver in the other car, we feel justified in saying and doing things we normally wouldn't do.

Finally, there is our respect for authority, for authorities, for law. Losing one's respect on the road, increases the possibility of also losing one's life on the road.

**Respect for the order of the home.** A home needs to be organized. It needs to have both a calendar and a clock on the wall. There needs to be a routine. There needs to be a time to come and a time to go. There needs to be a time to be together.

Before dad, mother or teenage children leave home, even if it is only for a few minutes, they should tell another family member, "I'm going to town to get some parts. I plan on being back by noon." The fact that everyone has a cell phone doesn't do away with this common courtesy.

Meal time is meal time. Mother should know who plans on being home for dinner. If something unexpected happens and it won't be possible to be home at the set hour...



ah, that is where a cell phone shines. Call: “I’m sorry, Mom, but I won’t make it home at twelve. Go ahead and eat without me.” That’s respect.

Mother, on the other hand, should do her best to have meals ready on schedule. A scheduled family, an organized family, deserves a gold edged diploma that says, “We love and so we respect.”

Respect includes little words like please, thank you, sorry, that was delicious pie...

A good friend of ours gave us a motto that hangs on our living room wall:



### **RULES OF THE HOUSE**

- If you drop it, pick it up.**
- If you break it, fix it.**
- If you eat or drink out of it, wash it.**
- If you step on it, wipe it off.**
- f you open it, close it.**
- If you empty it, refill it.**
- If it rings, answer it.**
- It if howls, feed it.**
- If it cries, love it.**

**Respect for Conference concerns** (decisions, if you prefer). The General Conference is the highest deliberative body on earth. The men—tillers of the soil, carpenters, day laborers...— take in hand affairs of the Kingdom that far outweigh the most ponderous cases heard by the togaed justices who sit on the bench of the highest court in the land.

To reject, despise, misinterpret or simply ignore the decisions reached by this deliberative body is serious, an infraction similar to that of the Children of Israel who believed they were merely spurning a cantankerous old prophet, but in reality were rebelling against God’s order.

There must also be respect for lesser deliberative bodies within the church. And respect, as always, means a willingness to obey.

**Respect for businessmen.** If our local businessmen were consulted before Communion and asked to give their opinion of the brethren who do business with them, it might interfere with the results of our self-examination.

Our worst manners show up in our business deals. When feeling we have been wronged by a businessman, we permit ourselves to say things we normally wouldn’t say to other mortals. Our non-resistance stance is tested far more severely when in a place of business than when we suspect an intruder is entering our house.

Businessmen—even unjust and dishonest businessmen—deserve a Christian witness. The fact that they have taken us for a ride does not give us the right to set them straight. No, we're not obligated to continue doing business with them. The fact that they have lost their religion doesn't give us the right to lose ours.

Businesses, especially the little one-horse businesses—mechanics, plumbers, blacksmiths...—sometimes find themselves in a financial bind. We tell them what we would like to have done and they give us a price of one hundred and seven dollars. Our facial features tell him we think his price is too steep. "If you do it for a hundred bucks, you can have the job." He needs the money so badly that he takes the job.

How much better it would have been to not argue price and then when paying, if the job has been well done, give him a hundred and ten dollars and say, "Keep the change. I appreciate your carefulness."

Yes, businessmen know us a lot better than we believe.

**Respect for the image of the church.** It is sad, sad, sad when someone forgets, or ignores, that he belongs to a holy body.

It's so unpleasant when someone we know in town asks us, somewhat embarrassedly, "Is so-and-so a member of your church?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, just curiosity."

But it isn't just curiosity. With a bit of prodding we find out the reason for the question.

"I thought you people didn't believe in going to races."

There it is.

God's church deserves respect. His doctrine deserves respect. His people deserve respect. When others speak to us about the church, about the doctrine and about the brotherhood, they should sense in us a deep respect.

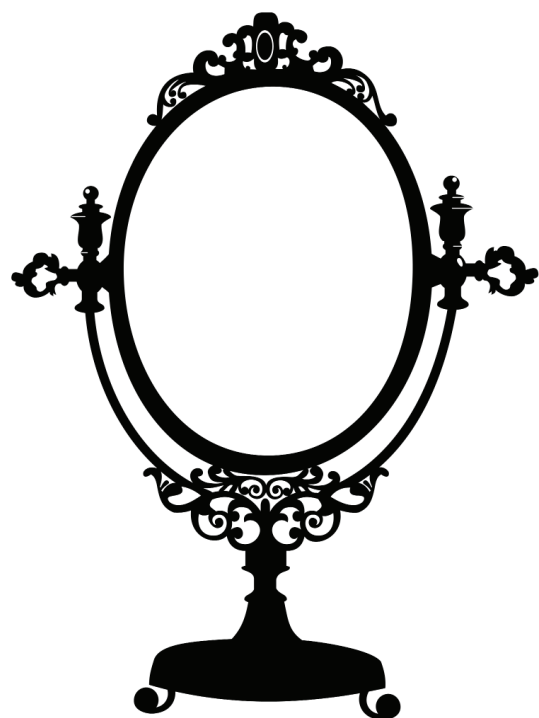
To discuss weaknesses and problems in the church with the world does not show respect, nor spirituality.

An unwillingness to present and defend the doctrines of the church shows disrespect.

To speak evil of or slander spiritual brothers and sisters, especially to the world, is very, very disrespectful.

We lose respect for a man who trumpets his wife's shortcomings for anyone to hear. The world loses respect for us when we freely discuss the shortcomings of our spiritual brethren.

*Respect—true respect—is not a mere social grace. Respect is a mirror that reflects the contents of the soul.*



## Self-Evident Truth

The truth is always right. So, when we are certain we have the truth on our side we assume we are right.

In the strictest sense of the word, this assumption is correct. But in actual practice, the truth does not always make us right.

Truth—self-evident truth—as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, is no guarantee that everyone will accept it as such. In fact, the British Crown didn't, resulting in the Revolutionary War with the loss of many lives.

In the kingdom of this world, being right can become a fighting matter. Unfortunately, in the spiritual kingdom being right can also become a combative situation. The old saying that “right makes might” is taken seriously to where the doctrine of non-resistance is spiritually trampled underfoot.

In civil litigation it is very common for both parties to be absolutely sure they are right, that the law is on their side—even though they are poles apart. Thus, when the case comes to trial, lawyers for both sides forcefully argue their case, each interpreting the law to fit their version of the truth. The saying that “It’s one thing to be right, but another to be persuasively right,” is taken another step. Thus, to be persuasive can not only make right triumph, but wrong as well.

One of the most difficult tests of character is to expose our conviction of right to the X-ray of opposing views.

A long-standing boundary feud between two neighbors came to a head when one of them sought legal counsel. After carefully relating the case, the lawyer smiled widely. “You’ve got a sound case. The law is on your side and you are bound to win in court. Shall we get the papers signed so I can go ahead?”

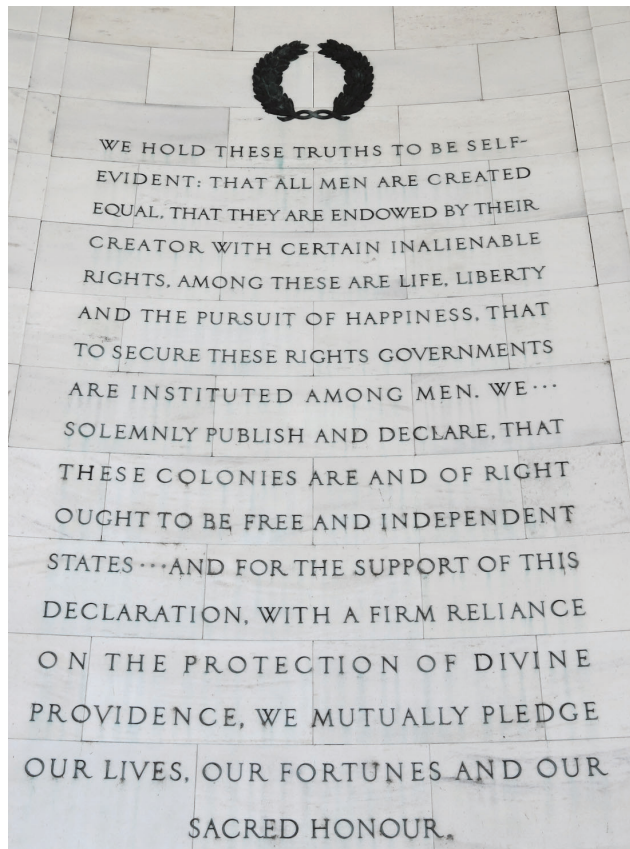
The man replied, “Let me pay you for your time... and no, I will not go ahead.”

Astonished, the lawyer asked, “This is an open and shut case. Why in the world will you drop it now?”

“Simple. I told you my neighbor’s side of the story.”

Intolerance for opposing views has slain, as the Israelite women attributed to King David after a crucial battle, its “ten thousands.”

We tend to regard opposing views as inimical. We fail to recognize that even when we are assured that we have the truth on our side, we can be wrong. To use the truth



as a weapon to cower others, no matter how right we are, is not right. Or put more graphically, to have the truth on our side does not make us a nuclear power.

One of the outstanding qualities of truth is humility. Humility does not place those with adversarial views in concentration camps. True humility understands that when the need is felt to defend truth with carnal weapons, right becomes wrong.

At times standing firm for the truth requires action on our part, to speak up, to put ourselves at risk. This requires courage. Even greater courage is required when we find that to defend the truth we must remain silent, be judged as weak, or even wrong, because we don't raise our voice or take a visible stand.

This is possibly the highest degree of abnegation. We call on the Apostle Paul, the great defender of truth and example to be followed, to sum up what we have said:

*And [the Lord] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.* ▲

## This & That

**Crop failures**—the kind that involve a total write-off of large acreages—are rare in our areas. In fact, in our 45 plus years in Brazil, this has never occurred. We have poor crops, average crops and bumper crops. This year some must add a new category: *very* poor crop. Rains began late and were spotty. Nevertheless, crops came up and looked good. Then, when soybeans were blooming, we had what was possibly the driest January in Colony history. Come February, when crops were ready to harvest, it began to rain. The prospects of at least a poor harvest plummeted even more as unharvested beans turned black. I don't believe any fields went unharvested, but the comment, "My beans won't make expenses," is frequently heard. In a normal year a second crop is almost always planted just as soon as crops are harvested. Needless to say, this crop, usually corn, depends on the final rains of the rainy season. Since harvest was late, will rains hold out to produce a second crop?

**The Economy.** Economically Brazil is in a precarious situation. For the last 12 years the Partido Trabalhista (Worker's Party), a leftist-leaning party has been in control. Our president, Dilma Rousseff, has just begun a second four-year term. Since her leftist policies, and that of her predecessor, that are having a strong influence on the present situation, her popularity has plummeted. The real problem, endemic to leftist or socialist governments, is corruption. It runs from the bottom rung to the top, there are not enough congressmen, or judicial officials with a clean slate to take a positive stand. These scandals are making headlines every day, which means that popular agitation may force changes. It should be remembered that Latin American capitalism works differently than N American or European free markets. Solutions to problems are frequently unorthodox, but sufficient to pull the ship off the rocks.

**Impeachment.** The economic situation of the country is bringing on demonstrations for the president's impeachment. In most impeachment procedures the opening shot is fired on the streets by demonstrators. At this point it is impossible to know how things will turn out.

**The US dollar.** This is intrinsically related to the comments on economy. The dollar/real exchange, which usually hung around 1:2 (one US dollar having the value of two Brazilian reals). In a matter of several months this has gone to 1:3. What does this mean down on the sidewalk? It means that it has become extremely onerous for Brazil to import goods. Inversely, it has been very lucrative for foreign exporters to sell their goods in Brazil. The same is true for Americans wanting to visit Brazil, who will not get 50% more for dollars spent here. In practical terms, this means that Colony folks who got a slim harvest and now will have to pay 50 percent more for tickets and dollars spent in N America will probably not be giving airlines a lot of business. An exchange of 1:3.5 is being projected for the end of the year. Only time will tell.

**Highway GO174.** This is the highway from Rio Verde that we from the Colony use to get to town. The GO (State of Goiás) means it is a state highway. Highways prefixed by BR (Brazil) are federal highways. The highway that comes through Rio Verde and goes on to Brasília is the BR060. Recently Faith and I went to Jataí (the opposite direction of Goiânia) to renew our Brazilian passports. This is a fine four-lane highway that was recently finished. Interestingly, there is far less traffic on this road than on the GO174—a two-lane highway. Faith often counts the vehicles we meet on the 25 km. stretch coming home from town. It isn't unusual to meet 150 or more vehicles, often half being large semi-trucks. Since this highway has no shoulder and needs repairs most of the time, the intense traffic, together with imprudent drivers, results in a lot of accidents. It has the nickname of "A rodovia da morte" (the Highway of Death). Unfortunately, it is a name that stands on its own merits. As soon as the rains stop—probably within a month—work is to begin on passing lanes. If this actually happens, it will certainly be a help. But the truth of the matter is that it should be a four-lane highway. With the financial crunch Brazil is facing, if we get the passing lanes, we should be happy.

**A lot of ethanol** is produced in Brazil. All gasoline has a 25 percent mixture. The government has decided to increase to 27 percent, and possibly to 30 percent. Since most of the later model cars are "Flex," that is, they run on either gasoline or ethanol, or any mixture, this creates no problem. A sensor analyzes the fuel being used and makes the necessary adjustment on the motor for maximum performance. By law, all service stations must have both gasoline and ethanol pumps.

**Blocked roads.** Seeking to bolster her rating in the polls for the coming election, our president kept the price of fuel artificially low. It helped win the election but sent Petrobrás, the state owned petroleum company, into a terrible quagmire. With its market price in a free fall, something had to be done, which, of course, was raise the price of fuel. The price of diesel fuel shot up—as did the ire of

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truckers. Several weeks back truckers set up roadblocks on some of the federal highways. It called nationwide attention to their demands, but disbanded after courts levied fines of up to 10 thousand reals (\$333.00 USD) per hour per truck for those who refused to unblock the highways. Now another protest was announced the 10th of March which was supposed to close *all* highways, both federal and state. It fizzled out, which doesn't mean there won't be more protests.

**Water and electricity.** The dry weather has not afflicted only the Colony. Some reservoirs that store water for hydroelectric generators are nearing the critical level, even before we go into the dry season. Unless the floodgates of heaven are opened during the next month, it is almost certain there will be rationing over part, and maybe all, of Brazil. This crisis could have been avoided had it not been for the constant delays in the construction of hydroelectric plants due to suits filed by tree huggers. There is a good chance there will be water rationing in São Paulo and some other major cities. We on the Colony have an abundance of water. With my chicken barns, there are two 10,000 liter an hour wells. That means that in 24 hours we can pump nearly a half million liters of water. In a word, on the Becker farm we have more water than money. Call it liquidity.

**Matrimonial balance of trade.** Three more weddings at the MonTree Alegre Congregation. On January 11, Duane Unruh from Missouri, married Sara Maia. Duane applied for a permanent visa and plans on making Brazil his home. On January 18, Leanna Dirks, of the Rio Verde Congregation, married Luan Santana, also from the Rio Verde Congregation. They are living in town. On March 1, Carolyn Dirks, from the Rio Verde Congregation, married Célio Jorge, from the Tocantins Congregation. They will be living in Tocantins. Both of these weddings were held at the MonTree Alegre Congregation because of space problems at the Rio Verde Congregation. So, the church in Brazil started out the new year in good shape with a deficit trade balance; one import and no exports. Remember, we here believe it is more blessed to import than to export.

**Buriti Shopping,** the new shopping mall in Rio Verde is in intensive care. At least a third of the store fronts remain boarded up and the hypermarket that was to come to Rio Verde never showed up. I suspect that nearly all the store are operating in the red. Business in the food court is slow and I have never seen any long lines at McDonalds. Either things must pick up, or after a year when contracts begin to expire, I suspect even more stores will be boarded up. Since Buriti Shopping has large, successful malls in different cities, plans are probably being made to get the businesses off of life support, because, really, it is a nice mall with a lot of potential.

**Travel Brazil!** If you have been putting off a trip to Brazil because it is too expensive, now is the time to get a visa stamped in your passport. With the current exchange rate, your dollars will go a lot further here in Brazil when changed to our currency. And visitors are always welcome. ▲