

# Brazil News



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## Editorial

### 60

There's nothing magical or symbolical about the number 60. If it has any special significance to numerologists, I am unaware of what it might be. Yet, as I faced my class of young people several nights ago in Bible Study, it became the basis of the lesson on preparing for our eternal home.

*"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years... and we fly away"* (Psalms 90:10).

In our study, we took 80 years as an expected lifespan. Since the median age of those present was 20 years, we assumed, for sake of the study, that they had another 60 years before them (leaving it patently clear that their last day could be any day).

To begin the lesson, all the students were asked to imagine that they suddenly had a sharp abdominal pain—sharp enough to where they would see a doctor. After a thorough examination, which would include a battery of lab tests, they would find themselves seated in the physician's office.

Calling the patient by name, he would begin: "I have bad news for you..." His carefully selected words, spoken slowly and compassionately, would have the effect of being seated on a merry-go-round that would go faster and faster and faster...until everything was a blur—except for several phrases: No known cure...60 days...60 days...60 days...

I suggested to my students that they should imagine that they had just received this diagnosis: No known cure...60 days to live. Then the question: What would they do the following day? During the 60 remaining days?

I sensed that my students were taking the question quite seriously. So seriously, in fact, that they hardly knew how to answer...

Would the young boys quickly buy the new pickup truck that they had been dreaming about for some time?

## Brazil 2 News

Would the young ladies quickly sew some new dresses?

Would they consider getting married?

Would they take part of their time to travel, to N America or to Europe?

No, with just 60 days to go, the words of the song, “Fade, fade, each earthly joy,” would effortlessly direct their lives. Those 60 days would be spent preparing for eternity.

We have said that the number 60 has no special symbolism, but it is a fact that a minute is made up of 60 seconds and an hour of 60 minutes. We have suggested what it would be like to have only 60 days to live. Now we up that number to 60 years.

For someone who is 20 years old, 60 years seems like a long time. For someone who is 80, it is a short, short time. The truth of the matter is that in eternity 60 seconds, 60 minutes, 60 days, 60 years or 60 centuries will all be exactly identical.

When U.S. Judge Leonie Brinkema sentenced convicted terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui to six consecutive life terms in solitary confinement without chance of parole, she said, “Mr. Moussaoui, when this proceeding is over, everyone else in this room will leave to see the sun ... hear the birds ... and they can associate with whomever they want. You will spend the rest of your life in a supermax prison. It’s absolutely clear who won... Mr. Moussaoui, you came here to be a martyr in a great big bang of glory, but to paraphrase the poet T.S. Eliot, instead you will die with a whimper.” And then she reminded him, “There is still one final judgment day.”

Moussaoui’s living quarters for the remainder of his life will be a 7 feet by 11 feet concrete soundproof cell, known as a control unit, in which he will be monitored every minute of his life by surveillance cameras. Other than for his guards, the only person with whom he will have contact is his lawyer. The cells in his block are constructed in such a way that it is impossible for inmates to make eye contact or speak with each other. Those who are acquainted with this type of incarceration have no doubt: it is worse than the death sentence.

From 60 days we jumped to 60 years. I asked my students to imagine what it would be like to be sentenced to 60 years in solitary confinement in an environment similar to what we have just described. You, good reader, are asked to use your imagination too...

If you today are 20, you will be 80 when your time is up. Because of the corrosive effect that absolute solitary confinement has on the nervous system, your chances of being released 60 years hence are almost zero. It is evident where that leaves you if today you are 30 or 40 or 50. Or more. But for the benefit of our little hypothetical situation, imagine that you are 20 and *will* serve your full term. And that you will receive no letters, phone calls or any other kind of news during this period.

Are you able to imagine what this would be like?

Quite a few years ago, the READERS DIGEST book section told of an American soldier in solitary confinement in a Vietnamese prison during the war. A dilapidated place, the walls were not as soundproof as in the supermax prison. Thus it wasn’t unusual at any hour of the day or night to hear the screams of prisoners being tortured. In each solid cell door there was a tiny peephole. The prisoner who wrote the book says the solitude was so great that he would spend hours with his eye glued to the peephole, hoping that

## Brazil <sup>3</sup> News

the prisoner across the corridor might be looking his way through his little peephole. Even though they couldn't see each other—indeed, they couldn't even be sure the other was even looking—the thought that maybe...just maybe...a kind of optical contact was being made, was immensely satisfying.

He also tells of a little mouse that started visiting his cell. He began saving morsels from his meager meals and feeding them to his grateful little visitor. Over a period of time a deep comradeship developed between man and mouse. The mouse moved in and would sleep under his covers. Then one night it happened. He rolled over in his sleep and crushed his little companion. When he awoke and beheld the dead body, his spirits were more crushed than the little mouse's body. He spent weeks in deep depression.

Solitary confinement, even under the best of conditions (if there is such a thing), is a terrible experience. Those of us who have never spent a single hour in jail as a prisoner, and much less in solitary confinement, are unable to imagine what it would be like to hear the lock on the cell door click and know that "this is home" for the next 21,900 days.

We can be sure that during this time...

Our parents and probably all of our uncles and aunts will depart this life,

We will not hear the voice of a single loved one,

We will not gather around the table for a delicious meal with our family,

We will not attend a single church service,

We will not hear a knock on the door and find a smiling friend coming to visit us,

When we are sick and in pain, there will be no one to lovingly nurse us back to health,

We won't see a single sunrise or sunset,

Nor see the trees turn color in the autumn, or the tiny green leaves in springtime,

We won't answer the phone and hear a friend asking us over for the evening.

Enough. We could fill this page and another and another with that which would suddenly cease to be a part of our life.

In a cover story in VEJA Magazine about prisons in São Paulo, the reporter found that every inmate knew exactly how many days he/she had left before becoming eligible for parole. Every night when going to bed, they were able to tick off one more day, a day that that would bring them one day closer to freedom.

21,900...21,899...21,898...

Five years go by. ("Let me see. My sister is now 20. I wonder if she has gotten married yet.)

20,075...20,074...20,073...

Another five. And another five. ("It's been 15 years since I've attended a church service.")

16,425...16,424...16,423...

Fifteen years. Half of the sentence. Only 30 years left. (Dad would be 85 by now, and Mom 84. Are they still alive?")

10,950...10,949...10,948...

Another 10 years. Only 20 left. ("Folks will be gone by now. Probably most of my uncles and aunts.")

## Brazil <sup>4</sup> News

Fifteen more years. Only five left. (“Oh, I can hardly wait. Just think! Only five more years. I don’t suppose I will know anyone anymore.”)

1,825...1,824...1,823...

Four more years. One year left. (“I’m almost free...almost...almost. Let me see, I’m 79 years old.”)

365...364...363...

30...29...28...

7...6...5...

Now come the hours.

24...23...22...

And the Minutes.

60...59...58...

The cell door opens.

“You are free.”

That was 60 years. Only 60 years.

A lifetime. In a sense all was lost during those 60 years. Sixty wasted years.

Roll the calendar back 60 years and let’s do a rerun. Again you are 20, standing before the judge. Looking down at you, he informs you that your sentence will be 60 years... Here he stops and gazes at you intensely. Sensing you are about to faint, he continues: “I have an offer to make. If you would be willing to be a Christian—a real Christian, a true Christian—the rest of your life, you need not go to prison.”

A real Christian. A true Christian. You know perfectly well what that means. Your folks have taught you what that means. Since a small boy you have heard sermons in church on taking up your cross and following the Lord. To tell the judge, “I promise to be a Christian the rest of my life,” is not a jump in the dark. You know what is involved. You don’t hesitate. Not even a second. Quickly, anxiously, before he changes his mind, you make a clear declaration: “I will be a real Christian, a true Christian, the rest of my life.”

You have promised that to avoid going to prison for 60 years. For 60 short years.

Too many young people have the impression that Christian life is hard. Matthew 11:30 would make better sense to them if it read, “For my yoke is hard, and my burden is heavy.” They are continually counting the cost, what they will have to give up to serve the Lord. They put their own “life and liberty” on one side of the balance and what Christ asks of them on the other. They shake their head. They have 60 years before them, 60 years to live and be happy. The thought of losing their “liberty” for the next 60 years seems too hard. Is it worth it?

But to stay out of solitary confinement for the next 60 years, they readily agree to be a true Christian. That puts things into a new perspective.

Eternity, we say, is forever. Let’s change the rules for a little while and say that eternity is for only 600,000 years. That comes to 219,000,000 days. (In our calculations we make no allowance for leap year.) And let’s assume that this time will be spent in solitary confinement in the supermax prison.

Let’s further assume that a young man, or a young lady, had the chance to be a Christian to avoid being sentenced to 600,000 years in solitary confinement. This young man, or

## Brazil News

lady, immediately accepted the judge's offer of clemency and promised to be a sincere Christian for the next 60 years. But after two years, or maybe even 10 years or more, decided that maybe the judge wasn't serious or had forgotten their case. He would never condemn anyone to 600,000 years of solitary confinement. So that young man, or lady, decides to keep on being a Christian, but not a "radical" Christian, like the judge requests.

It seems to work. The years go by. That young man, or lady, is now an old man, or lady. He/She looks at others who lived a life of "bondage" to stay out of prison. Fools.

Then, at the exact hour that this old man, or lady, turned 80, in the twinkle of an eye, he/she found him/herself before the same judge. This time there was no mercy, no offer of clemency: "Six hundred thousand years in solitary confinement!"

Six hundred thousand years is not eternity (even if we try to imagine it is). Not by a long, long way. Six hundred thousand years and eternity are as different as the size of a period on this page and the size of the earth. And infinitely more so. It taxes our imagination to know that someone sentenced to 600,000 years of solitary confinement would have a tiny, tiny ray of hope that would slowly, slowly, slowly grow. After 100,000 years there would only be 500,000 years left. And then 400,000...

In *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Alexander Solzhenitsyn relates one day in the life of a political prisoner in one of Stalin's forced labor camps in Siberia. It is true that some of the prisoners were common criminals. The majority, however, were political prisoners, many there on trumped up charges. In a region in which the thermometer could plunge to below 50 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, zero was considered excellent weather to lay brick. At 42 degrees below zero they could remain in the barracks during the day.

Most of the sentences ranged between 10 and 20 years. Needless to say, in such climatic conditions, plus extremely harsh treatment from prison officials, many perished before finishing their terms. But for the survivors, each day that passed brought just a bit more hope. One day less to serve. One day closer to freedom.

It would happen, on the long awaited day in which the doors to the work camp would be opened, that the prison supervisor would call the jubilant prisoner into his office and coldly inform him that because of some blemish on his prison record, he would have to serve another 10 or 20 years. Back to work.

Now imagine someone having served a 600,000 year term, and then be informed that there will be another 600,000 years. And then another...

Eternity won't be a mere 600,000 years. Nor will it be ten consecutive 600,000 year terms. And eternity won't be spent in a 7x11 cell in a supermax prison cell. (Oh! What a Hilton Hotel that would be! What luxury!)

*Eternity will be forever and ever and ever in flames of hell.*

It is interesting that we are more frightened by 60 years than by 600,000. Sixty years we understand; Six hundred thousand years we don't.

When I was a small boy in the old Lone Tree church, the aged minister John Becker (no relation, and whom I believe was born in Russia and came to America as a child) seemed unable to end a sermon without an exhortation about eternity. His voice would take on a plaintive, quivering tone as he spoke of the terribleness of hell, a time that

## Brazil News

would never end. This little boy shuddered inside as the aged pastor tearfully reminded us of the doom of sinners.

Let's face it. We're losing our consciousness of eternity.

There is a reason for this. Eternity is not only a place of torment; it is also a place of endless bliss. The fear of hell is lost at the same rate that we lose our hope of heaven. If heaven seems distant, hell will also seem distant. Paradoxically, as heaven becomes more real to us, so will hell. A proper fear of hell doesn't bring torment, but rather a deep gratitude that we have a better hope; it brings a heartfelt desire to be a real and a true Christian.

People talk about how unfair life is. They're right; life isn't fair. For a convicted criminal to come before the judge and have his sentence commuted isn't fair. The law book says that he deserves 60 years in solitary confinement, but the judge takes pity on him and releases him. That is human mercy. It isn't fair.

God's mercy is infinitely greater. When we have reached the age of accountability and knowingly commit sin, there is but one sentence: eternal damnation. Yet when we come to Him with a humble and contrite heart and accept the atonement made for sin, not only is our sentence of eternal death commuted, but we also receive a passport with a valid visa to the Celestial City. That's unfair. It's as unfair as anything can get. And to make it more unfair, anyone, no matter how great a sinner, is eligible.

A sanctified hope of heaven, together with a proper fear of hell, will create in us a balanced view of life and eternity. Rather than analyzing our problems and the decision we must make through the distorted lens of our own will, we will hold them up to the light of God's Word and see the solution exactly as He does.

It will enable a young man to cheerfully give up a promising career because it could jeopardize his salvation.

It will give the prospering farmer or businessman the grace to draw a line and reign in activities, knowing that further expansion could easily lead to irresistible temptation.

It will give wisdom, restraint and temperance when shopping in a mall that offers everything that the heart can desire (and more than the pocketbook can afford).

It will give grace to make extremely difficult and painful decisions, such as when Jesus said that "if any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

It will make putting money in the collection a pleasure; tithing will not be a burden because of a firm conviction that money in our hands will corrode, but that in the Lord's hand it can multiply like the loaves and fishes.

It will show us both the constructive and destructive potential of our words.

It will do all this and much, much more.

If you had 60 days to set your life in order to avoid 60 years in solitary confinement, you would take those 60 days very seriously.

If you knew you had 60 years (21,900 days) to set your life in order to avoid 600,000 years of solitary confinement, your tendency would be to take the first 60 days quite seriously and then grow slack. The last 60 days you would take things seriously again.

## Brazil News

Your life is uncertain and could end anytime. What is certain is that you will spend heaven or hell in eternity, forever and ever. Felix told Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Unless the true kernel of truth is in your heart, like the foolish rich man, you will say, “Soul, thou hast [...] many years; take thine ease.” Your message to the Holy Spirit will be, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

The touching hymn we often sing asks some deep, deep questions:

*Would you flee from sin and serve the Lord?*

*Do you know the end of time is near?*

*Would you save your soul at any cost?*

*Can you live and die in sin's career?*

*Will you cast your only hope away?*

The answer, so simple that absolutely everyone is able to understand, is the same for each of these questions:

*Be ready when He comes!*

That means now. You have no promise of 60 years, or 60 days, or even 60 minutes. Now means now. ▲

### Readers Write

*[The writer, our brother Paul Jeffery, who is presently living in England with his family, gives us some interesting pointers on life in the country that gave birth to the United States of America.]*

## The Same—But Different

(An almost Englishman's  
perspective)

A few weeks ago we had visitors from the North American Continent; that visit made me realize how different the British are to other English speaking nations. This brother and sister had arrived at one of the London airports and hired a car to come and visit us here in the northeast of England. They arrived at our house having enjoyed an ‘interesting’ and safe journey here. However talking with them we soon found out that although driving on the left hand side of the road was not altogether a new experience for them, it was nonetheless taxing to the driver's concentration.

That evening on taking them to their guesthouse, we realised just how strange it must be for someone not used to driving on our side of the road, to manoeuvre in our busy traffic. The following day we decided to take our visitors to see some typical English villages and go for a walk along the beach. We could see that the driver was having to concentrate really hard to stay on the correct side of the road. During the course of the drive both driver and guide (myself) got so confused that eventually

## Brazil 8 News

neither one of us could get our right sorted out from our left. We had a lot of fun!

Most people who come and visit find this country both quaint and very different. And I suppose it must be, having lived here for quite a while one gets so used to the way things are that one ceases to notice these differences and the quaintness, they become the norm.

England is a small island about the size of a mid-sized US state. In fact what we are referring to when most people refer to England is not just England but more correctly the United Kingdom, which is constituted of the four countries England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

People often ask, 'Then what is Great Britain?' Britain (Britannia) is the ancient name given by the Romans who invaded England, taken from one of the ancient tribes called the Britons. The name Great Britain was coined during the Victorian era in the 1800's to include all of the British Empire, which then included all the countries that England had colonised and were exercising government over. The British Empire no longer exists, as these countries one by one obtained their independence. What remains is a commonwealth of independent countries that once formed this Empire.

Some years ago, whilst living in Brazil, we had a conversation with a North American young lady who wanted to know where we were from since although we spoke fluent English, she must have detected that we were not from North America. On telling her we were from England, she wanted to know where that was and what language we spoke there.

Indeed any visitors from another English speaking country will notice that there are significant differences in our vocabulary; for instance In North America

They say pacifier, we call it a dummy;

They say dummy, we say silly;

They say diaper, we say nappy;

They say hood (of a car), we call it a bonnet;

They say trunk (of a car), we call it a boot;

They say sidewalk, we call it the pavement;

They call it a billfold, we call it a purse;

They call it a purse, we call it a handbag;

They call it a cookie, we call it a biscuit;

They call something a biscuit, something for which we have no equivalent;

They call it a mall, we call it a shopping centre;

They say gas, we say petrol;

They say 'quit it,' we say 'stop it;'

They say sweater, we call it a jumper;

They call it a jumper, we call it a pinafore dress;

They call it Jell-O, we call it jelly;

They call it jelly, we call it jam;

And so it could go on!

When we use the word 'homely' we mean it as a compliment, meaning cosy or comfortable.



## Brazil News

When we say, 'I don't care,' we mean exactly that—not caring about something. We would say instead, 'I don't mind.'

We say 'would it be convenient?' they say 'would it suit?'

When we say, 'would it suit,' we mean does the garment fit.

Some one once correctly said that the English speaking nations are nations divided by a common language. How true. But language differences are only the tip of the iceberg.

We consider ourselves a fairly multicultural family. I am Brazilian, born of English parents; my wife is British born of Jamaican parents. Our children were born some in England, some in Brazil. Having lived 15 years of our 30 years of married life in Brazil, in some ways we are obviously not the typical English family but that would be in the obvious points, like our skin colours, for example. In other ways, maybe the ways that matter most, we are truly British.

The English man regards his home as his castle. This probably goes back to the era of Barons, Dukes, Lords, Knights in Armour and the fortified castle. Right up to today the English home is literally 'fenced in.' The turrets and arrow slits are missing, but believe me, the mentality is still the same.

Now, green hedges, brick walls, or pretty wooden fences fence in our homes. No matter how small the plot is it is fenced in.

Many laws and regulations also fence us in. England is the only European Community country that maintains its border controls in regards to other European Community citizens. Privacy is highly valued and honoured in this country, and the home is the bastion of 'privacy.'

This obsession with privacy extends to the character. When abroad, the Englishman is noted for his reserved manner, especially when compared with his North American cousin, who goes all out to make everyone feel 'at home' even when he is in some one else's country.

There are certain questions you don't ask an Englishman.

Questions about his religion, his age, how much he paid for something or where he got it, how he is doing financially.

Once entrance is gained into an Englishman's 'castle,' there are certain guidelines for a successful visit and a future invitation.

It is unheard of to request or to expect to be shown around a home you have been invited to. You would be expected to remain in the living room and dining room. If you were a close friend this liberty might be extended to the kitchen. At the end of the meal guests are not expected to assist in the clearing up or washing of the dishes. Should a guest offer to help, he would be shocked if the host were to accept his offer. Traditionally the last course, the pudding (desert to our North American cousins), would not be cleared from the table; the host would invite the guest to 'retire' to the living room, where tea or coffee would be served. Depending on the company, children may, or may not, be present.

On the matter of children, up to the ages of around 10 years of age, children are not expected to be seen or heard after 8 to 8:30 pm. This accounts for why they are not

present at late evening meals. Babies up to about 3 years of age are in bed between 6 and 7 pm.

British parents fall into the indulgent bracket, where the children are given lots of money, outings, activities, etc., but not a lot of parental time, as mostly they would be out working. Having said that the typical British father (from all brackets of society) plays a very active role in his child's life, he will certainly take care of the bedtime ritual. In an English family this would be bath-time, the last drink and the bedtime story, before the child is tucked up for the night.

The typical English marriage is considered to be an equal partnership, where the husband is well able to cook, care for the home and the children. The wife sees her duty much as women do around the world.

When walking the streets of any city, town or village, one will meet people of all cultures and races. The burkha shrouded Muslim women, accompanied by her very modernly attired husband, brother, etc; the exotically clad Sikh ladies wearing their colourful saris, lavishly bedecked in gold jewellery and distinctively painted nails and henna tattoos on their face, arms or hands; with the men wearing their colourful turbans. Or brightly dressed African men and women in their traditional dress. Each group with its own distinctive dress style and accented English. You will see Somalis, Ethiopians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Afghans, etc, people from all over the world.

The arrival and settling of these various people groups has affected the British culinary taste as much as it has the culture. The Indian curry is said to be the number 1 favourite food here. The typical English roast meat, Yorkshire pudding and vegetables has long been ousted.

However the appeal of the traditional 'fish and chips' supper or lunch still reigns supreme. Walking through any neighbourhood one will detect the whereabouts of the local fish and chips shop – commonly known as 'the chippy') by its distinctive aroma wafting on the breeze. This is one English tradition that multiculturalism has not been able to oust.

Our supermarkets and local shops are flooded with exotic food and spices. If it is grown anywhere in the world you will very likely find it available in England.

England is a beautiful island, green, fertile and in spite of the unfounded rumours of constant fog and rain, we have a temperate climate with four distinctive seasons. Each one revealing its own special beauty. A drive through the English countryside with its pretty hamlets and villages is a delightful experience.

This is a country with a long and rich history. The country is liberally dotted with famous castles, towers, battlefields, roman ruins, ancient forts and pre-historic landmarks, the most famous being Stone Henge.

History is still alive and well in England. We are one of the few countries in the world with a constitutional monarchy (not merely figureheads). The queen is the head of the government, her signature being required to bring any law into being. She is also the symbolic head of the Church of England; one of her titles being 'Defender of the Faith.' Her son, Prince Charles, has intimated that if he should ascend to the throne he feels the title 'Defender of Faiths' would be more reflective of British multiculturalism.

On the whole, British society is humanistic, religion plays a very small part in peoples lives. They are generally respectful, but also unfortunately indifferent as touching spiritual matters. Possibly the fastest growing religious group in England today is the Muslim faith. The evangelical and charismatic churches would be the fastest growing ‘Christian’ group, with the Church of England experiencing a steady decline.

And so we have it, a brief glimpse of life in “ England’s green and pleasant land.”

**Disclaimer.** *In this article we make mention of various traditions relating to the home and family. Not being the traditional English family we would request you to feel free to break these rules if we ever have the privilege of welcoming you to our home.*



## My Sunday School Class

### **And a Little Child Shall Lead Him**

When I walked into church this last Sunday morning, I saw our brother Ely Bessa in the entrance with his little three-year old adopted daughter. His wife, Vânia, was holding their one-year old son, also adopted...

(I spoke to Ely and he graciously gave me permission to briefly tell the story of his life.)

Ely was not raised in the church. If he would have had the privilege of having Christian parents, doubtlessly his story would be totally different. The Bessa family places a higher value on certain principles than on virtue. If maintaining these principles requires strife, so be it.

Ely had a cousin whose nickname was Jornal (Newspaper). Jornal had a somewhat unconventional diversion: taunting the police in the hope of bringing on gunfire. Often he succeeded and it was always the police who came out with the short end of the deal. Even though he was high on the police’s hit list, through some sixth sense, for years he managed to elude them.

Some sports are more dangerous than others. Jornal’s little sport would surely rank as one of the most dangerous. Determined to put an end to his Samson-like pranks, the police began observing his habits and found that every day at a certain time Jornal would go to a neighboring town in his Jeep. Thus, when the police set up an ambush, Jornal made his last trip.

Ely was raised in this kind of environment and saw violence as something quite normal. Even though, so far as I know, he never took part in any similar activities, it affected his thinking process.

Conversion wrought a real change in Ely’s live. After many years of smoking and drinking, he was able to have victory over these old habits. In many ways his life changed. One area, however, that perplexed him right from the beginning, was the interrelationship of the brotherhood. A misunderstanding, a slight, an unkind word, would throw him for a loop. His spiritual immune system gave him little protection

against situations that more mature Christians forgive and forget. Although he never physically harmed anyone, he cleverly used his “old arms” to make it appear serious things were about to happen.

The result was church discipline with time spent out of the church in which he would fall back into some of his old sins.

Amazingly, even though the Spirit would depart from his life, he would hover close by. After the dust had settled, he would seek out some brother of confidence and in agony of soul and tears open his heart. Stumbling he would arise to his feet, and all too soon, fall again.

Ely had what appeared to be a good reconsecration experience and came back to the church. He married a very fine widow sister. From day one their relationship was turbulent. The question must have arisen in many hearts: Was this marriage really from the Lord? They would live together for a while, separate, reunite, separate...

Things reached a point in which they both found themselves out of the church. Together they moved nearly a hundred kilometers from here to where the government was offering free land to the landless. Interestingly, during this period their marriage began to heal. Brethren would occasionally visit them, possibly have a little service. Occasionally they could come to the Colony for a short visit.

The day came in which Ely sold the rights to his little plot of ground and bought a truck. He and Vânia, his wife, moved back to the Colony. They both had a good reconsecration experience and returned to the church. This time a greater stability could be sensed in Ely. And there was growth. Slowly but surely that old warrior mentality was being replaced by a Matthew chapter 5 nature.

As I watched Ely walk into church that Sunday morning holding his little three-year old adopted daughter—the one-year old boy was with Vânia—I thought to myself: “Here is this brother, who it appeared was a lost cause, giving a chance to two little children to become Christians.” No where could anyone find more Mennonite looking children than those.

I teach the Portuguese speaking sister’s class. The lesson was on The Insanity of Sin. During the lesson Vânia told an experience. She and Ely were driving in town in their truck when Ely had to slam on the brakes to keep from hitting someone. The vehicle behind them hit the truck. The driver, purple with rage, got out and began beating on the truck door, shouting that Ely would have to pay the damages. Her testimony: “I couldn’t believe it. Used to, Ely would not have let something like that happen; he would have been ready for a fight. This time he calmly told the fellow, ‘If I’m to blame, I’ll pay.’” The fellow kept yelling that he was going to pay, no matter what. So Ely went a step further. He said, ‘OK, I’ll pay your damages.’

“Suddenly the man turned and left. Those who witnessed the accident suspected he was going home to get a gun. About the same time a policeman showed up. Those who saw the accident told him what had happened. Ely didn’t have to tell the policeman a thing. He told Ely he should get out of there. So that is what we did.”

Vânia went on to say that it has been especially after they adopted the two little children that Ely has really changed. And he has. His conversation has changed. He

used to be a spiritual KGB agent; if he couldn't tell something bad about someone that was true, he managed to concoct something. And that was what he talked about most of the time.

Today Ely loves talking about his little children; he talks about his work; he talks about the future. No, Ely isn't perfect yet, and never will be. But I sincerely believe that God smiles when he looks down on that little family.

After church Ely spoke to me about something that was heavy on his heart: Those who are dying of hunger in Africa. He wanted to know if there isn't some way we could raise money, at least a little bit, and send it to help those who are starving. He says he has almost nothing, but he thinks he could help at least a little bit.

We get a good feeling when we see the dedication Ely shows to those two small children. We say it's wonderful that he is showing them the way. It is...but I can't help but wonder. Could it be that they are the ones who are showing him the way?



## This & That

**The World Soccer Cup** is now in the past, and so are Brazil's hopes of winning for the sixth time. This year, for the first time, I have heard no one blame the referee. The team manager is getting his usual share of the blame, but the majority admit that the team just didn't play well enough. Their greatest consolation now is that Argentina and France didn't win either. Italy took the cup.

**The Preparatory Class**, the fifth in Brazil, was held from July 11-21 at the Rio Verdinho Congregation, with Ed Yost as the instructor. There were 12 boys from Brazil and 10 from the US and Canada. It is a nuisance to do everything through an interpreter, but on the other hand the cultural exchange is a big plus. It is amazing how quickly boys who don't speak each other's language make fast friendships. I understand that two of the boys, a Brazilian and a N American were riding in the back seat of a car on the way to the place where they would spend the night. Those in the front seat report that the boys were soon engaged in an animated conversation. In some kind of a neo-Pentecostal experience they overcame their language barrier and discovered that both made their living cleaning chicken barns. This interchange has a very positive impact on the church in Brazil.

**It is a fact that Brazilians sway to music.** Samba comes just as natural to a Brazilian as chewing gum does to an American. Anyway, Jakelline Lima, the girl who works with us in the office, spent nearly two months in the US. Her dad, deacon Adejenes Lima, told me today that coming home from the airport in Goiânia, he suddenly heard his daughter laughing in the back seat. He asked her what was so funny and she said every time they hit a stretch of bad road, they would sway back and forth. In the US, where roads are all good, there is no swaying around. So, there you have it. Both music and bad roads get Brazilians into the samba mood. Já pensou, o nosso diácono sambando que só ele...

## Brazil <sup>14</sup> News

**Two weddings.** One at the Boa Esperança Cong. in Mato Grosso: Elfrain Dias, son of sister Orlinda Santos, to Rebecca, daughter of Dan & Marlene Kramer. The second wedding, in Tocantins, was an international affair. Rob, son of Dan & Gloria Holdeman, from Idaho, married Jessica, daughter of Leo & Mim Dirks. Since their little church won't hold very big crowds, they had the wedding and reception at four o'clock in the afternoon in a large restaurant. Since the lunch customers were slow in clearing out, the wedding got started late. But in the end everything worked out and the couple got married.

**Global warming** has hit Brazil too. Our dry seasons are slowly getting warmer and warmer. When we first moved to Brazil, we would have two or three fairly hard freezes during each dry season. Now we seldom have even a light frost. Gardeners don't miss the frosts.

**Valéria, the circus lady.** In the past we have printed several articles written by Valéria. You will remember that the man she lives with is the owner of a circus. For years Valéria was the ballerina. As she became interested in the gospel and learned to know the church, the Lord showed her it is wrong to paint herself up and dance. Over a year ago she decided to quit. She called us recently and told how that a number of the circus workers quit and it looked like she would have to go back to dancing. She prayed that the Lord would somehow make a way that she needn't contaminate herself with that which she had left. The Lord answered her prayer. Her big hurdle now is that she knows she must leave the man with whom she is living. This is complicated because of her teenage daughter. Valéria asks for our prayers so that she can follow as the Lord gives light and opens the door to press ahead in her new life.

**Tyson Foods** is sniffing around in Brazil. There is a good possibility they will be setting up shop here. Maybe, some say, even buy out one of the big chicken/hog processors already in operation. This could get interesting.

**The towers are up** for another high tension transmission line that is coming through the Colony. With up to 40 meter towers, this one is going over the top of woods.

**Cloned phones.** Our rural phones are actually analog cellular phones adapted to our need. Workers in the phone company leaked out the internal codes to these phones and today a number of the phones on the Colony are inoperable because of having been cloned. Some have been without a phone for three months. It appears we are going to have to invest in digital systems to get around this problem.