

# Brazil News

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## Editorial

### **Sibboleth**

A denominational minister likes to tell the story of the time that a young man sought his counsel. In deep distress, the youth told of his doubts and fears as related to eternity. In a singular display of objectivity, the minister had but one question to ask: Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Very likely the young man had believed in Jesus as the Son of God from childhood, so in all honesty he answered, "Yes, I believe."

The comforting words of the minister were, "Then you are saved!"

The minister ends his story by smiling contentedly and saying, "The young man was saved and didn't know it!"

This little story, which unfortunately is true, strikes us as glaring deception. On the other hand, we have all had occasion to meet someone who not only seemed totally sincere, but appeared to have a kindred spirit as well. As we discussed our beliefs, we found we agreed on all...well no, on almost all of them.

Such an encounter makes us feel good inside, it touches a soft spot in our heart. We wish so much we could be one. And what keeps us from being?

We have reason to believe they are sincerely trying to do what is right.

They have a wide open door to witness for what the Lord has done for them, which they unabashedly do.

Their children are obedient, courteous, well behaved.

They attend church regularly and are active in the work of the kingdom.

We have every reason to believe they are honest, morally sound people.

They tell of a new birth experience and of experiences in Christian living that seem so similar to ours.

They pray before meals at home, in restaurants, possibly have family devotions, and have a good knowledge of the Scriptures.

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Needless to say, they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Truly, such acquaintances strike a soft spot in our heart. But way down deep there are several gnawing questions:

In spite of the oneness we feel, there are some differences we can't ignore, beginning with church membership. We have no intentions of joining with them and it is evident they have no intentions of joining with us.

While they share our views on most doctrinal issues, we notice that their belief in some of them is more historical or intellectual than practical. This would be especially true of the doctrines of non-resistance and nonconformity. Outwardly they blend seamlessly with the world.

In most cases they go all out for sports and education.

They delicately sidestep taking a stand on polemical issues or condemning prevalent sins, seeing this as being judgmental.

As their children grow older, many of them are far more liberal than their parents, while others make no pretense of carrying on the faith of their fathers. Their youth groups are generally very small.

They resignedly accept the fact that when their children get married, some of them will join the church of their spouse, not seeing this as any obstruction to their salvation.

All this and more. Yet sometimes we look upon these folks with a twinge of envy. Are we being a bit too rigid? Could we loosen up a bit here and a bit there and still maintain our salvation?

Passwords and pin numbers are very much a part of modern life, especially in the area of computing and banking. These words, sometimes numerical or alphanumeric sequences, or even a particular sign or sound, are for all practical purposes the equivalent of a combination that opens a safe. The "safe," in this case, may be a bank account, confidential information stored on a computer file, or access to a restricted area.

Passwords and pin numbers are unforgiving; one letter or number omitted, transposed or incorrectly entered, renders them totally useless. Not only do they keep intruders from accessing the "safe," but not uncommonly the owner himself when the "combination" is lost or forgotten. This can be both a traumatic and very expensive experience—unforgettable, to put it mildly.

A password can mean the difference between life and death.

When the European mainland was invaded at Normandy by the Allies, troops were airdropped behind enemy lines—at night. More often than not, they did not land in the target areas, and as can be imagined, many lost contact with each other by the time they hit the ground.

Military planners had foreseen this exact situation and struck up a unique solution for reuniting soldiers into fighting groups. They knew this would be ticklish business. In unknown territory, at night, how would a soldier know if the noise he heard or the movement he saw some meters away was a cow, a newly arrived buddy or an enemy soldier? To turn on a flashlight could be suicidal. To call out in English, "What

company are you from?” could bring on a hail of bullets. And yet it was most important to regroup to face the enemy.

Some of you readers may remember the little tin crickets that were in vogue years ago, which would make a chirping sound when squeezed. This was the solution. Shortly before invasion, both the paratroopers and infantry were all given a little tin cricket. The password by which they would identify each other would be a chirp. This little project had been conducted in great secrecy and it was obvious there would be no way the enemy would possess mechanical crickets.

And so, out in the dark in enemy territory a chirp would be heard, and then an answering chirp. Time and again this happened in utter darkness and companies were quietly reformed.

On the other hand, if a chirp got no reply, it could mean that an enemy was close by. At the same time, the enemy, only hearing a cricket chirp, didn't suspect what was happening.

An even more impressive story of how a password can mean the difference between life and death is found in the Old Testament, in the book of Judges.

Jephthah reminds us somewhat of Samson. He was an impulsive, reckless person with a strong personality. Contrary to Samson, who was chosen prenatally by God for a special work, Jephthah was the issue of a liaison between his dad and a prostitute. His brothers cruelly rejected him, as though he was somehow to blame for his dad's reproachable behavior. The elders of Israel, possibly in an effort to do the politically correct thing, sided with the brothers (who coveted Jephthah's share of the inheritance) and declared him a persona non grata in his father's house.

Not one to cringe, nor given to self-pity, Jephthah struck out for the land of Tob, where he roamed about with a band of ragtag followers.

When the Ammonites invaded Israel, there was no natural leader capable of assembling an army and leading them into battle. In desperation, the leaders of Gilgal remembered the rebel Jephthah, who in spite of his self-imposed exile, must have somehow managed to create for himself a name as a warrior and leader.

When interviewed by the elders, Jephthah proved himself an astute negotiator. He reminded them of their past insensibility to his plight. They didn't deny their wrongdoings and continued to insist he be their captain. He accepted, on the condition that his leadership not be limited to the duration of the war, but that he would subsequently judge Israel. With no viable option, his demand was accepted.

Jephthah demonstrated a good deal of common sense when he attempted to settle the impasse with the Ammonites through diplomatic channels. He requested that the Ammonite king set forth his reasons for believing that his nation was the rightful owner of Gilead, going so far as to offer to return the land if he could make a solid case.

It became evident to Jephthah that the Ammonites had no rightful claim to Gilead. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he made plans to resist the invasion.

Jephthah thoroughly routed the Ammonites and that should have been the end of

the story. But it wasn't. Instead the victorious expulsion of a common enemy was deeply resented by the men of the neighboring tribe of Ephraim. Indignantly they accused Jephthah of deliberately excluding them from his battle plans, presumably to not be obligated to divide the spoils with them.

The accusation was unfounded. In spite of not needing their help, as events proved out, he *had* invited them to take part in the battle, but they showed no interest. So great was their ire, so rancorous, that they crossed the Jordan River with the intent of burning down Jephthah's house—while he was in it.

And as if these evil intentions weren't enough, they accused the Gileadites of being fugitives, castoffs of the tribe of Ephraim. It wasn't Jephthah's nature to let such offensive language go in one ear and out the other. He mustered his men and led them to battle, this time against his own brethren from the other side of the river.

The Ephraimites were no match for the fury of Jephthah. After suffering terrible losses, the survivors turned tail and fled to the Jordan River, where they hoped to cross back into the relative safety of their own territory.

Jephthah, the shrewd warrior, foresaw their action and sent men ahead to guard the fords on the River Jordan where he knew the Ephraimites would attempt to cross over, with orders to slay them.

The hastily constituted "customs" officials on the Jordan River soon found things weren't as simple as they had imagined. In a desperate effort to hoodwink Jephthah's soldiers, the Ephraimites declared themselves to be Gileadites. Since both tribes spoke the same language, knew each others customs and probably dressed the same, this posed a dilemma. Should these soldiers be found guilty of slaying men of their own tribe, they would likely be court-martialed. Obviously no one carried a passport, an I.D. card or a driver's license for identification, so some other method had to be found to unmistakably identify all those wanting to cross the river. As usually happens in border regions, there were probably a lot of locals who regularly crossed back and forth.

The method that these customs officials came up with to ascertain the identity of those wanting to cross over was ingenious for its simplicity.

It's true that the Gileadites and the Ephraimites spoke the same language, but as frequently happens between different regions, even today, subtle differences in pronunciation had crept in. Aware of this, Jephthah's customs agents created a simple password test, on which the enemy soldier's life depended. They would demand, "Say 'river.'"

The word river on the Gileadite's side of the Jordan was pronounced, "shibboleth," with a shhh sound, while on the Ephraimite side it was "sibboleth," for the Ephraimite "could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand."

Truly, passwords are unforgiving.

Those of you readers who have learned the Spanish language will sympathize with me when I tell of my woes in trying to "frame to pronounce" the harsh sound of the letter "J". I very distinctly remember the occasion when several Mexican youth decided to help me to frame to pronounce the word *pájaro*—bird.

They would clearly pronounce pájaro—pá-ja-ro—stressing the syllables, and I would dutifully repeat, “pah-hah-row.”

Seeing the negative results that my utter concentration brought, they would burst out laughing and then have me watch their mouth and tongue as they gave the J the proper rasp. “Pah-kah-row” I would say, which would bring on new fits of laughter. I don’t know how long this little torture session lasted—maybe a half hour—but I simply couldn’t frame to pronounce bird in Spanish. If at that moment my life would have depended on correctly pronouncing pájaro, I would have perished.

What is going to happen when we reach the Jordan River and are face to face with the Eternal Judge?

Will there be a court session in which He will bring up all the good and evil we have done during this life? Will He weigh everything we have ever done, said or thought on the balance and see if we are found wanting?

Will judgement be a question and answer session in which He will demand answers, like He did of Job?

Will souls appear before him unaware of their eternal status and then anxiously wait for the verdict as He ponders their case?

Will there be some very close calls? Will some just barely make it into heaven? Will others almost make it—but end up in hell?

Or will there be a password? And if so, what will it be? How do we acquire it?

The criminal on the cross got his password during his final moments of life.

The apostle Paul fought a good fight, he finished his course, he kept the faith, for many years. He received his on the way to Damascus and kept it safe until his presumed death in Rome.

One was faithful for a matter of minutes, the other for many years. One didn’t perform a single good work, the other’s life was made up of innumerable good works. So the password isn’t good works nor time of service.

We don’t receive the password by never missing a meeting, by never getting to church late. We don’t get it by tithing. Teaching Sunday school and being on fire for the work of the kingdom for a lifetime doesn’t guarantee us a password. Giving of oneself freely on boards and committees doesn’t do it. Spending a lifetime overseas spreading the Gospel and finally giving one’s life gives no assurance of a password.

So what is the password?

1John chapter 5 tells us clearly that “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” and that “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the [password] in himself.” Jesus himself declares that “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

It is utterly impossible for the human tongue to frame to pronounce the password that grants safe passage across the Jordan River. Multitudes believe that if their literal tongue can frame to pronounce “I believe in Jesus Christ,” they are prepared to cross the Jordan. If that is all it takes, then the troubled young man who besought his pastor was truly saved.

Then those who have found an easier way will know the password, for they speak of their belief in Jesus Christ.

Then those who worship the virgin Mary will be saved, for they also believe in her son Jesus Christ.

Then even those who have never been born again can be saved—if they say they believe in Jesus Christ.

Then those apparently sincere souls whom we sometimes envy have nothing to fear, for they believe in Jesus Christ and openly profess His name.

If being able to boldly declare, “I believe in Jesus Christ,” is the password, then saints and sinners may have to change lanes, with the multitudes of saints filling the broad way and the stragglers on the narrow way.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked, flesh and blood can not frame to pronounce the password that gives safe passage over the Jordan River. Only those whose mouths have been touched by a live coal which the Seraphim retrieved from the altar, have had their iniquity taken away, and have lived in purity, can truly frame to pronounce the password.

Jephthah’s soldiers showed no mercy at the Jordan River for those who said sibboleth, and neither will the eternal Judge for those who stand before Him at the crossing and say, “I believe in Jesus Christ.” ▲

*[I received the following article after work was begun on this editorial. Carlos Ambrósio is a quiet, unobtrusive, middle-aged brother, a mason by trade. Right now he is doing some repair work on the literature center, so I see him almost every day.*

*One day he somewhat timidly told me that he had written an article; would I like to see it? Yes, by all means, I told him. After I had read it I asked him for more details. The experience he tells was actually a trance which occurred one day while on another job. He says he was still aware of his earthly surroundings, while finding himself in another world for over an hour.*

*He makes it clear that what he saw and heard was not the final judgement, but rather an admonition which he received directly from the Lord. What he found impressive is that he was given no chance to speak, only to listen. And obey, if he so chose (which I’m confident he did).*

## Your Brazilian Brother Writes

*by Carlos Ambrósio*

### **The Judgement Hall**

I would like to relate an experience that I recently had with the Lord. It took place the beginning of this year. I felt God was trying to get my attention, but for some reason I couldn’t understand what he was trying to say. This caused me to take a serious look at my life.

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One day as I was praying, I told him that this was bothering me. I asked, “Lord, why am I like this? Why don’t I grow more? Why don’t I understand more about Christian life? Why do I so often come short of the mark? Help me, because I want to do your will. Help me to make a full surrender. Behold, I give you my life and my heart. Take them and do what you see best. I only ask one thing, that you show me why I am so prone to fail, and that then you give me strength to walk in holiness before you.”

It was after I finished this prayer that something strange happened in my life. I won’t tell everything that took place, because I have neither words nor the ability to relate what happened that day. Oh! What an unforgettable day!

I don’t know how it happened, but suddenly I found myself in a small room. I was seated in a chair with a table in front of me. I looked at the table and found that it had something like a tablecloth. Instead of having some design, it was covered with writing. Next I looked at the walls and found that they too were covered with writing. All of this writing reminded me of the pages of an open Bible.

Next I noticed that that room had no doors nor windows. I looked around and all I could see were the walls and the table. Then I heard a deep voice and felt I was being watched by two great, all seeing eyes. They seemed to take up all the space in that room as they bore down on me. These eyes looked right into my inner being and the voice which I heard struck me so that there were no longer any hidden areas in my life, no more resistance, no more rights, no more defense, and no way to ask for forgiveness. There was no way open to flee from this situation. The only things I could do were listen to the truth, weep and agree with everything, for my whole life was exposed in the writing on the wall and on the tablecloth. That deep voice was now bringing to light my entire past. Nothing was hidden, and if I would have wanted to hide something, it would have been impossible. I was helpless to hold back that which was taking place before my eyes. Oh! What a terrible thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God! That was exactly what had happened to me.

When I came into that room, all the writing on the walls and on the tablecloth hadn’t bothered me because I couldn’t read the writing. It was all gibberish until that deep voice and the all seeing eyes began revealing my past life. It was there that I began to understand what was written. I saw that it was the story of my life.

My beloved, even though we believe that everything is well between us and our brother, we should take heed lest we too are overtaken by God’s judgements. We should take stock of our life every day. It is so much better that we judge our lives now than to let things go until the last day, for then everything will depend on God and not on us.

I’d like to bring out one thing that caused me to agonize in that room, which was unforgiveness. As we hear many times in sermons, by nature we have difficulty releasing our brother after he has done us evil.

I will try and relate some of the details of my trial. I was seated on the chair by

the table when all of a sudden the deep voice and the great, all seeing eyes enveloped me. I heard the following words: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4). When I heard those words, it began to dawn on me that this was very serious business. Any peace of mind I might have had was wiped out as I was brought face to face with my past. I was taken back to the first pages of my life’s story. Then as I traced my life, my heart became heavier and heavier. Those all seeing eyes seemed to momentarily withdraw and what weighed the heaviest on me was my unforgiving spirit. The eyes drew closer again and enveloped me. I couldn’t hold back my tears any longer.

I want to tell you some of the things that touched me deeply during this experience which I had:

I saw my wife on the different occasions when she would come to me with tears in her eyes to ask my pardon for something she had done amiss. But my hard heart wouldn’t forgive her. Those great all seeing eyes enveloped me and the deep voice asked, “Who wiped away those tears?” Those words broke me up and I wanted to get out of there so that I wouldn’t have to see that desolate scene anymore, but this was impossible.

I saw another stormy aspect of my life, which was my relationship with my children. I was taken back through the years to when they were small and I would punish them without giving them a chance to give me their side of the story. With a hard heart I would mete out the punishment that I felt they deserved. Again I felt those eyes and heard the voice that asked, “Who wiped away those tears?”

I wept bitterly. It seemed the only rights I had in that room were to see, hear and weep. I didn’t have the right to ask for forgiveness. It appeared that the word “pardon” no longer existed.

(Dad, mother, when you discipline your children, but sure it is done in love.)

The next scene was a continuation of my relationship with my children. I saw the times I was unreasonable with them to the point where they were crushed down; I saw the tears running down their cheeks. Those great eyes enveloped me and the deep voice asked, “Who wiped away those tears?”

I frankly admit that all this was very hard on me. I remained silent, for I had no right to speak, suffering under the gaze of those eyes which wouldn’t leave me. There was no way that I could escape during this time of suffering. As I sat there in that room, I so wished that the preachers or anyone for that matter would come and stand by me, but that was impossible. In that room without windows and doors, the deep voice said, “Everyone must be judged,” which only increased the agony of my soul which I had to suffer all alone. This terrible suffering of this Calvary was all my fault, because of my negligence, because of refusing to take heed to the Word and accept the will of the Lord.

Another scene appeared before my eyes. A certain person once said some very harsh things about me. I knew that the things he said weren’t true, so I didn’t go after him or start a fight, but I made sure I stayed clear of him. Several days later



I remarked to my wife how upset I was with that person. My heart was a stone.

All of a sudden that person showed up where I was. With tears in his eyes he asked my forgiveness. All I answered him was, “Don’t worry about it,” making sure I didn’t tell him that I would forgive his wrongs. He waited for a little bit, as though he hoped I would say something else. When he saw I wasn’t going to say anymore, he left, still with tears in his eyes. Once again those great, all seeing eyes enveloped me and the deep voice asked, “Who wiped away those tears?”

By now I was suffering horribly and even so it kept getting worse. I asked myself, “Why didn’t I forgive when I had the chance?” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Another scene that came before me was during the time my oldest son was still in grade school. He and one of his classmates had a falling out and my son ended up with some bruises. When I found out what had happened, I went after that boy and really raked him over the coals. Later on, as I was walking to work, I met the boy on the street. With tears in his eyes he begged me to stop so that he could tell me what had really happened. But my heart was hard and I acted as though I didn’t even hear him. Those great, all seeing eyes enveloped me and the deep voice asked, “Who wiped away those tears?”

The agony I felt kept increasing, as did my tears, but since I didn’t have the right to talk, I couldn’t tell my God how badly I felt about all this. In this place I could look, suffer and feel remorse, but I couldn’t confess my sins, for here the word “confess” didn’t exist, which made my suffering all the worse.

In just a few words, this is what I experienced in the judgement hall. I don’t know how the Lord got me out of there. I must confess that I was totally done in. Nevertheless I found grace to come to God in prayer and ask Him to forgive my failings and ungratefulness. I was able to see the hardness of my heart by the fact that when I found myself in that room, I believed everything was okay. But thanks to God, he warned me and gave me the opportunity to repent, to be forgiven and change my life.

My brother, my sister, if you have noticed that something isn’t right in your life, if you’re not growing spiritually, if you find you have an unforgiving spirit and aren’t able to love your brother, if you have the knack of throwing either the first or the second stone, or any other problem of this nature, I would like to encourage you to enter the furnace of purification and give your heart and life over to the Lord without any reserves. Let Him reveal the content of your life. Who knows, maybe as happened with me, you will have to face some unpleasant scenes.

I want to leave a word of encouragement with our school teachers. If it becomes necessary to discipline your students, do so with love and don’t ignore their tear stained cheeks. Because, who will wipe away their tears?

May we all pray for each other with a sincere heart, so that all the chosen may stand before the Lord transformed, arrayed in shining robes, with crowns on their heads, ready to enter the Holy City and dwell with the Lord eternally. Amen. ▲

Linguistics

## An Open Letter to My Cousin in India

*I received a letter from my cousin Loren Becker, who, together with his wife, is now stationed in India.*

**Dear Charles,**

We're doing fine, just attempting to adjust. One month has past since we arrived here. The hot season is from April to May, when temperatures reach 115-120°F. The rains start to come in June and July.

I would like some clues for a 56 year-old on how to learn another language. This language is of Sanscript origin. They say it is about like trying to learn Russian. No one who has been here as a missionary has really learned the language, but almost everyone has attempted...

Since relocating the mission out into the country in about 1990, we have gotten up to about 95 members...

Shrines are scattered through town and in the country. Many of them have recorders turned on high early in the morning. With education it seems the tide is shifting towards more open-mindedness and some people are very open to Christianity. They are learning their present system is not fully practical...

The Indians hold you as a close friend, once you get to know them. They are quite knowledgeable in many ways, but the country is so highly populated that there is little opportunity. The government used to restrict families to two children, now it is one child...

Love,  
Lorens

**Dear Loren,**

Ambassadorships are rated by the social, economic and political structure of each country. To be assigned a post in London obviously bears more status than to be sent to Montevideo.

In the church we don't use this system. A missionary is a missionary no matter where he is stationed. Yet for the brother or sister who has been approached by the mission board about the possibility of being a missionary in a neighboring state, or in a Third World country half way around the globe, will involve two different sets of considerations. It is sort of like the young lady who receives a proposal from a young man who is blind, confined to a wheelchair, or suffers from some other abnormal situation. Human reasoning says no, love says yes, so the answer is yes. The marriage may be as perfect as they come, but they will have to deal with some atypical problems that other couples won't have.

Loren, that's how I see someone going to India or Mozambique. You are there because you and Marilyn said yes, but it's going to be a real challenge, to say the least.

You ask how a 56 year old man can learn a language—a difficult language. Without

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an exceptional proficiency at learning foreign languages, you, like others who have been there, won't learn the language fluently.

Don't let these blunt words discourage you. Really, the important thing isn't whether you learn to speak the language, but that you learn to *communicate* with the people. That you can do with a very small vocabulary.

Pete Loewen had been in Brazil for only a short time before he was killed in an accident (in 1973). His knowledge of the Portuguese language was extremely limited. Yet he *communicated* with the Brazilian people better than some who have a rounded out vocabulary.

He would sit down with little children and sing to them in English, and although they didn't know a word of English, they understood the message of the songs perfectly. To this day people remember these special acts of love.

Pete believed in giving people rides. If God blessed him with a car, then he could bless the lives of those who couldn't afford one. I remember the night he got back from town about midnight. He unloaded his VW bus and said, "I'm going back to town." He had promised somebody a ride back from town; he would stop at the person's house on the way out and pick him up. But he forgot. That was back in the days when our roads were full of holes and gates and could take several hours to drive to town. Yes, he forgot, but he corrected things by going back and picking the man up. Do you suppose that man ever forgot?

Loren, that's communication. When the mission board sends a 56 year old man to India, they know he probably will never become proficient in the language. But that doesn't keep him from being an A-1 missionary any more than a girl marrying a crippled boy keeps them from being a totally happy and useful couple.

A mission board member who used to come to Brazil frequently on official business, as well as to help us in revival meetings, probably doesn't know over a dozen words of Portuguese. Yet he communicated beautifully with the people. Seeing some children on the street, he would stop, squat down, take a piece of paper and slowly shape an airplane. Ever curious, those children would come in closer and closer, until they formed a tight circle around him. He would smile and teach them how to make paper airplanes. That's communication.

After man has done his best, God will do the rest. What you lack in vocabulary, God will supply in a sixth sense. He will help your spirit to understand that which your mind doesn't comprehend. A man in his early 20s will probably learn the language a lot better and quicker than you. But he lacks the experience you have.

In spite of what I have just said, try and learn the language. Study. Practice. Be thankful for each new word you learn. But don't get discouraged over the ones you can't seem to manage to get down pat. Learn to communicate. The secret is love.

Thanks for writing.

Your cousin, cb



## Questions & Answers

### Inspiration

Question: How does your inspiration develop for the articles you write?

Answer: The most fertile soil I have found for inspiration is in Sunday School. I alternate between the Portuguese adult class and teach the youth boys class, also in Portuguese. Between these two classes, I have some high producing diamond fields.

Why can so many gems be found in Sunday School?

I have found that any brother or sister who is living close to the Lord is a potential diamond mine. Not only in Sunday School, but wherever you happen to meet. I have repeatedly been amazed at the pristine thoughts that even an illiterate brother or sister can produce.

For Sunday School or Bible Study to be a success, people have got to be willing to talk. I have been in classes where no diamonds were gleaned. By the time class was over one had the impression he had been trailing the straw spreader of a combine. If there was any grain, no one found it. To make matters worse, this has occurred when there were visitors in class from other churches.

Sunday School and Bible Study are like a carry-in dinner. To carry out one must first carry in. To expect that 20 percent of those attending will bring enough food so that 100 percent can carry food out is preposterous. Yet that is what consistently happens in some classes. A few must do all the talking (and then be criticized by some of the non-talkers for talking too much). James says that pure religion is to visit the fatherless and widows and keep oneself unspotted from the world. I wish he would have added: and to take an active part in Sunday School.

Why am I able to regularly carry diamonds out of the classes I attend? Because to carry out diamonds, someone must carry them in. Fortunately, that is what happens in these classes. ▲

### Political Analysis

Question: What does it take to be able to understand and summarize information about the political situations in countries?

Answer: There are some rules which must be followed:

1. **Sort out headlines.** The first thing we look for when we glance at a newspaper are the headlines. The larger and bolder they are, the more important the news. Or so we believe.

At times this is the case. Often it isn't. It isn't every day that something really newsworthy happens in our country, in our state, in our nation, or even in the world. Some days, as happens in our personal lives, are routine. In order to get in their quota of headlines,

editors resort to blowing up news that on an eventful day wouldn't even be considered front page fodder.

Someone who seldom reads a daily will have difficulty sorting pertinent news from filler. The more assiduous reader will soon get a feel for what is really worth reading.

**2. Select your source.** Few, if any, newspapers or magazines are truly impartial. Each one slants the news to fit its particular editorial philosophy. Consequently it is helpful to subscribe to a paper that interprets news in a digestible way. In the past—and maybe still—U.S. News & World Report seemed to come the closest to portraying the political scene as we see it.

**3. Select your commentators.** A good paper (if there is such a thing) will have good commentators (if there is such a thing). Pay special attention to what they say. When something happens and fur is flying everywhere, branches are falling and the air is thick with dust, don't pay a lot of attention to headlines. See what the commentators have to say.

We had a commentator here in Brazil, Castelo Branco, who died several years ago. I have never seen anyone who even came close to this gentleman, for truly he was a gentleman. Contrary to so many of this species, he was not a muckraker. All his negative comments and criticisms were made in such a courteous manner that when someone would write him to suggest he had missed the point in his column, the letter would normally begin something like this: "My dear Castelo, as you know I am one of your faithful readers and greatly respect your opinions, but..." It's unfortunate we don't have more Castelo Brancos around.

You ask, "What does it take to be able to understand and summarize information about the political situations in countries?"

Basically it is *not* believing most of what you read, but rather relying on the opinions of sober commentators, and then drawing your own conclusions.

I realize there are those who feel we should stay aloof of political happenings. They may be right, and yet I have never gotten the impression that the apostle Paul turned his back on the political scene of his time. I believe he kept up on current events. Whether we like it or not, whether we admit it or not, our lives are directly influenced by political decisions and trends. Maybe to have a little bit of an idea of what is taking place, and could take place, isn't all bad.

## Thinking Out Loud

### **The Progress of the Page**

**Scene 1** — Dipping a quill into an inkwell, an article is written. Additional copies must be laboriously copied by hand.

**Scene 2** — With a quill an article is written and then taken to a printer, who with a tweezers selects each individual letter from a tray and thus sets the type, which is placed in a press, making it possible to reproduce hundreds or even thousands of copies of the same document.

**Scene 3** — With a typewriter an article is written, which, after being corrected, is sent to a printer, where an operator retypes the document on the keyboard of a linotype machine, which casts slugs out of molten lead that can be assembled and used in a press that turns out tens of thousands of copies.

**Scene 4** — With a computer articles are written on a word processor (MS Word, in the case of BN), corrected and then imported into a desktop publishing program on the same computer (PageMaker, in the case of BN), formatted, and then sent to the publisher (Quality Printing, in the case of BN) on a diskette, where the articles are electronically transferred to a printer (a Riso digital duplicator, in the case of Quality Printing), where thousands of copies can be made in a matter of minutes.

**Scene 5** — Articles are written on a word processor, corrected, formatted on a desktop publishing program and sent to a web site, where they become available to millions in virtually every country of the world, who have the option of reading what was written on the screen of their computers or making a print out on a laser printer with perfect resolution.

**Scene 6** — Articles are dictated, which instantly are relayed to the web site where they are transcribed and formatted, and then resubmitted to the writer for final corrections, after which they become accessible to readers throughout the earth, in many cases translated into their respective languages.

**Scene 7** — Articles are “thought” and immediately sent to a web site through a transceiver chip implanted in the author’s body; readers throughout the world, also with embedded chips, will “read” the articles, all in their own language.

**Scene 8** — All articles “written” are automatically stored in an information center and “readers” with an implanted chip will have mental access to all the information in the world. The human brain will be but the hallway to an electronic brain that will record thoughts, emotions and minute by minute happenings, which will be permanently stored away.

Scene 6 is on the verge of taking place. If the Lord gives time—and permits—scenes 7 and 8 will also become a reality. Man has the capability of becoming an electronic god.

If someone would have described life as it is today to the children of Israel, they would have been no less astounded—and incredulous—than you are at this very moment.

And except those days be shortened... ▲

## **This & That**

On March 2 the Colony youth spent the day at Ponte de Pedra, a natural bridge some 90 km from the Colony, out beyond Montividu.

On March 3 some of the sisters got together at Kathy, Mrs. Stanley Holdeman’s place to sew dresses for Denise Dirks, whose suitcase got lost on American Airlines.

Earl & Johanna Schmidt and Sid & Irene Schmidt spent several weeks here. Sids had sale on the 4<sup>th</sup>, formalizing their move to the US.

The Schmidt land was sold to the Koehn brothers (Ileen's boys), Luiz Fernandes and Paul Yoder. Earl's home place went to Ben Koehn, Stacy's to Luiz Fernandez and Sid's to Paul Yoder.

Arlen & Tina Wiggers, from Wisconsin arrived for a term on the mission. After spending a few days on the Colony, they settled into the mission house in Goiânia, where they are in language study. Michelle, bro. Divino Ismael's daughter, is their instructor.

Those who attended the Annual Meeting from here were Elias Stoltzfus (who also held a short series of meetings at the Pipe Stone congregation in S Dakota), Dean Mininger, Duane Holdeman, John Unruh, Arlo Hibner, Harold Holdeman, Daniel Kramer, and their respective wives.

Maxine Loewen, who is presently teaching school at Fawnsdale, Alabama, was out for several weeks to be with her mother, Edna Loewen, who was quite ill.

Mervin & Norma Jean Loewen and children transferred from the Goiânia mission to the mission in Curitiba. Adriana Soares, from the Monte Alegre congregation, went along to teach their children.

Harold Dirks made us one of his periodical visits to bring his business up to date. He still owns land here.

Paulo & Valéria Rufino from Patos, Paraíba were out for several weeks to visit friends and relatives in the Rio Verde area.

On March 22, Perdigão had a field day near Rio Verde about poultry barns. They were surprised at the interest shown by the people in the region. They are falling behind on their schedule because of problems related to financing.

On March 24, Ibama, the Brazilian wildlife agency, turned 40 canaries loose here at our place. This particular species, called Canário da Terra, cannot legally be held in captivity. They all belonged to the same owner, who raised them commercially. The beautiful, roomy, handcrafted cages were taken back to Rio Verde and destroyed. Someday I hope to write on the different reactions of these birds when they are given their liberty.

On March 27, Anthony & Wynelle Koehn had a girl, Faylene Rose.

On March 31a baby was born that became Dean & Esther Lou Mininger's daughter—Bethany Dawn.

For those of you readers with more than a passing interest in Brazil, I would like to introduce a book called *Brazil Five Centuries of Change*, by Thomas E. Skidmore, published by the Oxford University Press. The book isn't easy reading, but it is loaded with information—very accurate information. I especially recommend this book for those living here in Brazil and for missionaries who would like to have a grasp on Brazilian history.

Ever since its inception, corruption has been the scourge of Brazil. In spite of all its natural riches and an intelligent populace, Brazil hasn't managed to shake its third

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world shackles. That may be changing. Increasingly there is public outcry against political corruption. As people become more educated, they realize that they are picking up the tab for the rich men's parties. And it isn't going over. The press is working overtime to expose corruption at all levels. I have said before, and repeat, if Brazil gets its corruption under control and begins to operate at full potential, you'll be reading more and more about this S American country.