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Editorial

Three Samaritans and No Complexes

Never has it been easier to rationalize our unpleasant behavior. By carefully selecting the proper scientific term, we can transform the majority of our vices, if not into virtues, then at least into acceptable behavior.

In our circles, few terms have been more thoroughly abused than the inferiority complex—"A persistent sense of inadequacy or a tendency to self-diminishment, sometimes resulting in excessive aggressiveness through overcompensation." (A.H.D.)

If on one hand some have conveniently invoked the complex of inferiority to justify their lack of sanctification, others have gone to the opposite extreme of asserting that all feelings of inferiority are rooted in pride.

The fact that some have falsely taken refuge under the umbrella of an inferiority complex, does not mean that this complex doesn't exist. Since some people end their lives by drowning, this same logic could mean that all deaths by drowning are suicides, thus putting the sinking of the Titanic in a new perspective.

We believe that there are people of all ages who carry severe mental scars because of the abusive or subhuman conditions in which they were raised. This is especially true when the victim was coerced into secrecy. While conversion and repentance save the soul, that doesn't necessarily remove the mental scars.

We believe there are people who struggle under legitimate feelings of inferiority, and need help. Fortunately these cases are rare. We also believe that there are entirely too many perfectly normal people walking around with an inferiority complex umbrella which they snap open at the slightest provocation. This is finely honed pride. It's not hard to tell the difference between the real and the fake. People who have a legitimate inferiority complex won't use it as an umbrella. In fact, very likely they won't even be aware that they have such a problem.

Really, this article isn't about pseudo-inferiority complexes. Rather we want to look

at some Samaritans who apparently would have had plenty of reasons to feel inferior, yet didn't.

The Samaritans, a minority group, were a downtrodden, despised people, a byword to Jewry. And it wasn't entirely without reason. Their religion, which divided the adoration of Jehovah with their own gods, was certainly not a model to be followed, even though most of them probably carried some Jewish blood in their veins.

With their propensity for extremes, hard line Jews made a point of letting Samaritans feel their canine status. Many a child must have asked, "Mom, why don't those people even look at us?" In the marketplace, "Dad, why don't those people who are dressed like that ever buy anything from us?" Or, little brother with older brother, "Why do those people hate us so bad?"

Without a doubt, the Samaritans were a people held in contempt. And yet some of the most beautiful stories found in the New Testament involve this "inferior" race.

The woman at Jacob's well.

Jesus and His disciples were traveling from Judaea to Galilee. It was noon and they were both tired and hungry. While Jesus rested on the well, the disciples went ahead to a village to buy something to eat. It was during their absence that the Samaritan woman showed up.

Seeing Jesus was a Jew, she assumed there wouldn't be so much as an exchange of greetings, and much less any kind of conversation. In silence she drew her water from the well and was preparing to leave when Jesus spoke. "Would you give me a drink, please?"

The woman had several options. She could have contained her wonder and silently given Jesus what he asked for and then returned to her home. She could have said something like, "At least we're good for something." Or she could have plain snubbed him. "Sir, in case you haven't noticed, I'm a Samaritan and I'm sure you don't want any water from me." And then turned her back on him and left Him thirsty.

But no, this woman showed no resentment. Curious, she asked, "How does it happen that you, a Jew, are asking a favor of me?"

Had the woman been flustered or nettled by this strange request, she could have taken the even stranger answer to her question as proof that Jesus was just "a bit off." "If you understood the gift of God and knew who it is that is asking you for a drink, instead of giving him some of your water, you would ask him for a drink—and get it."

The woman understood His words, but not their profound meaning. Her almost saucy answer shows she was not intimidated by this Jew. "I don't see how you could possibly give me a drink. The well is deep and you have neither a bucket nor a rope . . ." She may have paused a bit here, realizing that for this stranger to make his words good, there would have to be some sort of miracle involved. She continued, "Are you suggesting that you can do something that our forefather Jacob couldn't do?" There was a sure logic in this question. After all, even Jacob, the venerated patriarch, couldn't draw water without a rope and bucket.

Jesus gave several more clues. "Whoever drinks the water from this well will soon be

thirsty again. But if you drink of the water that I am offering, it will be as though there were a well right inside of you. And so you will never be thirsty again.”

The woman believed that Jesus could make His promise good, but still was somewhat confused. So she answered, “I’ll take some of that water. Just think, then I won’t have to come to this well several times a day anymore to get water.”

By now the woman must have taken a liking to this strange stranger. But how could she possibly be prepared for his next statement? “If you really want some of this special water, then go home and get your husband.”

This abrupt change of course in the conversation, maybe Jesus’ tone of voice, must have set little bells to ringing in the woman’s head. She answered, “I don’t have a husband.”

“You’re right,” Jesus told her. “You’ve been married five times and you didn’t even bother to marry the man you’re living with now. At least you’re truthful.”

This woman may have been truthful, but by no means was she a saint. To have been divorced five times and now living in open adultery was not a compliment to her character. And yet we must admire her for her honesty. She could have burst into tears and said, “Oh, there you go! All you Jews can do is pick on the Samaritans.” Or she could have hedged. “Who told you all that?” She might simply have said, “If that’s all you have to talk about, I’m leaving.” And strode off with her head high.

Not this Samaritan woman. The pieces to the puzzle were falling into place. “Sir, you have to be a prophet.” Inspired by this thought, her quick mind saw the opportunity to get a divine answer to an age-old question, one that possibly was debated many times as people sat around and talked in her village. “Our forefathers worshipped right here on this mountain, but you Jews say we should worship in Jerusalem. What do you say?”

And this is where we find the true beauty of this account. To this Samaritan woman, an outcast, an adulteress living in open sin, Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, revealed a profound truth, a truth that the self-righteous Jews couldn’t comprehend. There must have been a special tenderness in His voice as he spoke to this unpretentious woman who so much needed His help. “Woman, let me tell you something. Before too long it won’t even be a question whether the Father should be worshipped on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don’t even have a clear idea of whom you should worship. The Jews do, because they are the rightful heirs of salvation . . .”

What a blow! Here this prophet, this Jew in whom the woman was beginning to trust, put his finger right on the sore spot. Had she gotten up and haughtily stalked away, that would have been the end of this story. She didn’t. And Jesus continued.

“But the time is coming—in fact it’s here!—in which anyone who is sincere may worship the Father in spirit and in truth. It’s this kind of people He is looking for to be the heirs of salvation. Since God is a Spirit, to worship Him in spirit and truth depends on the condition of the heart, and not on a particular mountain or city.”

Take a good look at the woman. She seems to be gazing into space. Inside her something is stirring. What she says next could appear incongruous with the

conversation. But it isn't. This adulterous woman, living in open sin, has glimpsed something that the mighty rulers of the day couldn't, or refused, to see. Carefully weighing her words, she observed, "You know, someday a Messiah is going to come. He will explain all these things to us."

The Good Shepherd's heart must have overflowed with joy when he told this woman, "It is He who is talking to you right now."

It was at this point that the disciples returned. They were fully aware that their Master did not restrict himself to conventional behavior. Even so they weren't prepared for this scene by Jacob's well. But even Peter had learned that at times like this he could show better intelligence by opening his eyes and ears and shutting his mouth.

As they watched, the woman suddenly placed her water pot on the ground and left in the direction of town. Almost at a run.

We don't know how long she was gone. Probably not very long. But once the disciples were alone with Jesus, they laid out their lunch and said, "Have something to eat."

Imagine their surprise when he answered, "Thanks, but I have my own lunch."

Once again the disciples decided it would be better to not ask for explanations. But off to themselves, they asked, "What do you suppose happened? Did someone give Him something to eat?"

Someone had.

It may have been at the exact moment in which the Samaritan woman, who told the men of the village, "Come see a man whom I believe is the Christ," came around a bend in the road, bringing a large group of seeking souls with her, that Jesus satisfied the disciples' curiosity. "My food," he said, possibly with a significant look toward the approaching Samaritans, "is to do the will of He who sent me."

He added, "You say it's four months until harvest, don't you? Look out there. It's harvest time right now! The heads are white, they're ripe."

During the next several days the disciples witnessed this harvest. Because of the testimony of that Samaritan woman, that sinful and despised woman, to whom the disciples wouldn't even have spoken, many souls from her village learned to know the Savior.

The Samaritan Leper

If a Samaritan symbolized the world, a leper was regarded as sin itself. Indeed, if the Jews would have evaded sin as they did a leper, they would have been a sanctified nation.

To be both a Samaritan and a leper was a heavy load. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews, but had their own society in which they felt at home. The lepers, on the other hand, were despised by everyone, including their own people—and family, as the disease progressed.

As if the mental anguish of being rejected by society and loved ones wasn't enough, they had to daily see their own members slowly being devoured by this awful sickness.

The ten lepers who called on Jesus for help the day he was walking from Jerusalem

to Galilee probably lived together in a crude camp out in the country. They knew that they would be roundly cursed if they showed up in civilization, and more so if they perturbed so famous a man as Jesus.

When the subject was brought up of going to see Jesus, the Samaritan could easily have stayed behind. He could have said, “Look fellows, I’m not going. I don’t think that this Jesus will even look at us. And even if he does, you Jews might have a chance of being healed, but you don’t need to think for a minute He’ll pay any attention to a Samaritan.”

That isn’t what he said. In fact, he may very well have been the one who came up with the idea of trying to see Jesus.

But it wasn’t easy. Since leprosy destroys the extremities, their feet were probably stumps and their hands stubs. They probably needed crutches, but how do you hang on to them without fingers?

They made their way to the outskirts of a village where they figured Jesus would come through. Stationing themselves a short distance from the road, they waited.

As Jesus drew near, they began to shout, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! Master, have mercy on us!”

It’s possible He didn’t even slow his pace. He may have barely glanced at them. That isn’t important. To the lepers what mattered were the words he spoke, “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” That’s all. But it’s all it took. All ten were healed.

We have reason to believe that Jesus performed many miracles of this type. We know that only a fraction of His miracles are recorded in the Bible. We can be quite sure that this miracle found its way into Holy Writ, not because of the nine Jews who were healed, but because of the Samaritan leper who returned to give thanks.

The good Samaritan

We needn’t tell this story. The Bible doesn’t tell us if this Samaritan was tall or short, rich or poor, young or old, married or single, comely or homely, strong or weak. It really doesn’t matter. The important thing is what he did and not what he was.

But we get the impression that he’s the sort of fellow we would enjoy having in our neighborhood, in our congregation. When he came across the wounded man, he didn’t help him because of what people might think if he just walked by. He didn’t do it because it would be a reputation builder if word got around. He didn’t dump the man near the inn door and then hightail it. He could have though, “We all need to do our part. I brought him this far. Now let others chip in and help too.” And he didn’t shrug his shoulders when he saw the man, and say, “Since we Samaritans aren’t good for anything anyway, let the big shots take care of this.”

Not at all. He stopped and rolled up his sleeves because there was a need and because “when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” Then he opened his pocketbook and made sure the man would get good care.

All three of these Samaritans have their stories recorded in the Bible. During the last nearly two thousand years, hundreds of millions have been inspired by their examples. And we should be too.

Why? Because these Samaritans made no attempt to hide under an inferiority complex umbrella. They did not let their natural disadvantage in life put them at a disadvantage with the Savior. Rather, as the writer to the Hebrews commands, they came “boldly unto the throne of grace,” and there they obtained mercy, and found grace to be helped in time of need.

If you, good reader, feel you are cumbered about with many inferiorities, remember the three Samaritans who found special favor with the Master because they had no complexes. ▲

Paulo David's Column

Reflections on Culture and Spirituality

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. —1 Corinthians 9:19-23

As I read these words of the apostle to the Corinthians, I am impressed with verse 19, where it says, “I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.” This is proof of the Spirit of Christ in the apostle. He made himself servant unto all, a Jew unto the Jews, and weak unto the weak. I can't help but ask: If the apostle would write to the church in Rio Verde, would he say, “I made myself an American unto the Americans and a Brazilian unto the Brazilians?”

Culture has become quite a popular subject. We talk about Brazilian culture, about American culture. One feels that his culture is superior to the other. Another feels just the opposite. Yet another feels it's useless to discuss culture with someone so far down the cultural ladder that he doesn't even know what culture is—or isn't. Then there's the one who declares that all cultures are equal, or the one who defends the “Christian culture.” This sounds good, but when an effort is made to define just what this is, things bog down, because the “American way of life” is obviously the standard for good Christian culture. So, let's face it, in our culture it is the culturally accepted thing to discuss culture.

I believe that in the beginning of the Christian era, there must have been a situation similar to what we have described. This would especially be between the Jews, to whom the gospel was first preached, and the gentiles, who heard it last. At different places in the New Testament we see evidence of cultural problems.

The Jews had the tendency to judge themselves better than others, which is one side

of the coin of pride. The gentiles sometimes saw themselves as inferior, the other side of the coin of pride. When Jesus spoke of one shepherd and one fold, was He trying to say that there would only be one culture? Do you suppose that He expected that the gentiles would all turn into Jews in Christ. Or did He want both cultures to merge into a new culture? And if this was the case, how do we explain the strong influences that different cultures have had on God's people through the centuries? We could even suggest a historic culture, but then how do we decide what is of God and what is of man? Do we call it a Mennonite culture? A Holdeman culture? Or what kind of culture?

We could go on and on with these conjectures and not get anyplace. So let's drop the thought of the Jewish Christian, the gentile Christian, the American Christian and the Brazilian Christian. Let's go back to what the apostle Paul had to say in our text. Let's learn from him how the Spirit of Christ operates. We know that Paul was familiar with many different cultures, but he saw none as a hindrance to Christianity. He doesn't point to a superior culture, nor does he look down on inferior cultures. In humility he made himself all things to all men, and to do this he had the spirit of a servant. As a Jew, he could have very easily taken on a superior air and been a Jew unto the gentiles. But that's not what he did. Rather he became weak unto the weak, a Jew unto the Jews, and without a doubt, in our day he would have been an American unto the Americans and a Brazilian unto the Brazilians.

Isn't this the unity that the apostle speaks about in his epistle to the Ephesians? Cultures will never divide God's people. What can create a division is the lack of love and humility. Love and humility are far more powerful than any cultural barriers or differences. We just as well face it, the proud find it difficult to coexist with those who don't fall into their mold. That is why when our pride rises up, we find there is a barrier between us and our foreign brother or sister. It may be because we feel we are superior and it may be that we feel inferior, but either way there is a barrier.

How beautiful it is when we can be united in love and humility! In this unity we can worship in the same house of prayer, and even though we speak different tongues, we can all be blessed. Or do we believe that the blessing depends on the service being in one language or another?

Karl Marx believed that the only way to unite mankind was for everyone to be equal. And communism came to naught.

Jesus is able to unite men and women from all walks of life and unite them as one. This is the Church of God. This is the Spirit of Christ. Is this what we want? ▲

Your Sister Writes

by Selionir Silvânia Miranda

How God Helped Me During a Difficult Time

[Sister Selionir and her husband, Nilton, are members of the Pirenópolis Congregation. They have 2 children, Patrícia, 16, and Robson, 12, both members. Selionir has a limited education and I have tried to maintain her writing style in the translation.

As you read her experience, try and imagine what you would do if you were suddenly thrust into a similar situation, with no money and no health plan.

And as happened with Job, Satan did his best to use her physical problems and bring her down spiritually.

It's noteworthy that almost all her contacts during this period were with the Brazilian brethren. In other words, this was a Brazilian problem solved in a Brazilian way.]

I am writing to tell about another of the miracles that God has done in my life.

A year ago I began to have pain in my left kidney. A lab test showed that it was infected. My husband told his boss about my problem and he arranged for me to see a doctor in Goiânia through the SUS [a government agency that gives free medical care]. The doctor ordered a number of lab tests, but I didn't get the results back for two weeks. Then when I went back to the doctor, I was told that he wouldn't be working for some time because he had broken his leg. My husband called his boss and explained what had happened. He didn't want me to come back without seeing a doctor. So he paid the office call with a private doctor and said it was a present he was giving me.

The doctor looked at the lab results and said that I had three stones in my left kidney, that I was about to lose it. I had two stones in my right kidney, but they weren't a problem right then. He said that the best thing I could do was to have the stones removed by a machine, that if I had conventional surgery, I ran the risk of losing the kidney. Since my blood pressure was high, the sooner I had the surgery the better, especially since I was in danger of losing the kidney. That would be even worse for me.

My husband asked the price of the surgery and the doctor said it would be 800 dollars. We left the doctor's office without scheduling the surgery, because we didn't have that kind of money. We checked in other hospitals and everywhere we went the price was even higher. My husband and I stopped and had a prayer, asking God for direction. He felt we should talk to the brethren. So he called to the missionary in Goiânia and told him what was going on and that we were thinking about asking for help. What did he think? He encouraged my husband to ask for help.

My husband left me in Goiânia and returned to Pirenópolis to discuss the situation with the church leaders. Since it was an emergency situation, they decided to loan me the money immediately and then take it up with the other brethren to work out the details.

We went back to see the doctor and he set the day for the surgery, a lithotripsy—that's what it is called when the surgery is done by a machine. He prescribed some medications and asked that I not eat anything the day prior to the surgery.

When the day came, I went to the hospital. They got me ready for surgery, but then the doctor was off talking to the nurse. Finally, after quite a while, he came back and said I could go home, that because I am quite heavy the surgery wouldn't be a success and I would waste my money.

I didn't like that. Hadn't the doctor noticed before that I am overweight? I had been

waiting 12 days to have surgery, and now I was back to where I started. Although it is true that right from the beginning I had asked God to open doors so that everything would work out. So now when the door shut, I took that to mean it wasn't God's will to have surgery now.

The doctor said he could do the surgery through a catheter, but it would be more expensive. The price was now \$1,100. I called my husband and told him about this new development. He said I should ask the doctor if he would give us some time to pay. He agreed to this. I spent several more days taking medication while waiting for the surgery. In the meantime, brother Divino and the missionary from Goiânia took me to another doctor to see if he would do it cheaper. But he asked even more. Through all this I was getting so run-down that I didn't know if I could take it anymore.

My sister called the doctor and he prescribed another medication for me to take and said that as soon as I was feeling better, he wanted to talk to me. When I went to see him, he said that it wouldn't work to do the surgery through a catheter and that it would have to be conventional surgery. The price was \$1,300.

I called my husband and told him what the doctor had to say. The following day he came to Goiânia. I told him that I felt God had something else for me, but didn't understand what it was, that the way things were going, it didn't seem this was His will. My husband thought that maybe I felt that way because I was so run-down.

We went back to the doctor and for the third time he scheduled the surgery, this time conventional surgery. This was on a Wednesday and he set the surgery for Tuesday of the following week. That same day we returned to Pirenópolis. We got there late at night. Just as we got home, my son became quite sick and we had to take him to the hospital.

All the time the conviction grew in me that He didn't want me to be far from home and that it wasn't His will that I have conventional surgery. But I didn't have clear direction on what to do.

The following day my daughter went to work. When she came home for lunch, she said that she heard that the hospital in Anápolis [just a short distance from Pirenópolis] was being equipped to do lithotripsies. My husband said he thought we should go there to see if there was anything to it. Maybe I wouldn't have to be cut open.

That night brother Luís Fernandes paid us a visit. I explained to him how I was feeling, that I just couldn't see that it was God's will that we go the Goiânia route. He wholeheartedly supported my conviction.

Sunday we went to church and talked with brother Antônio [the other leader in Pirenópolis]. I told him about the doubts I was having. That afternoon he paid us a visit and said that he had thought over what we told him. He said that when I was in Goiânia, often he thought about me, so far away from home. So he began to pray that God would open the door so that I could come home. He added, "Let's change our prayer and ask God to do His will and not our own. Maybe He wants things to happen in such a way that He will get all the honor and glory."

When brother Antônio left, we knelt down and prayed to God, asking that His will be

done in me in such a way that He would get all the honor and glory. My husband decided to return the money they had loaned us. We felt God would cure me in another way.

We went to brother Luís Fernandes' house to return the money. When we got there, the first thing he asked me was if I was ready to go to Anápolis the next day to see the doctor. My husband said we wanted to wait to see what God would have for us. But Luís told him that it was God's will that I get medical help. Maybe we should change doctors, but not drop the idea of getting medical help.

The next day we went to Anápolis. What the doctor in Goiânia had taken a month to tell me, this doctor told me in 10 minutes. He agreed that my left kidney was in bad shape and I was about to lose it. The right one wouldn't bother me for a while. He said that the machine they had ordered should get there on Tuesday and then it would be set up. He would call brother Luís Fernandes as soon as it was ready—and that my excess weight would be no problem. He said the price for this surgery would be \$800.

When I left the doctor's office, I felt that this was the course God wanted me to take. I felt we were now following His leading. My husband called to Goiânia and called off the surgery.

Wednesday of the following week I didn't feel well enough to go to mid-week meeting. When my husband got home from church, he said that the doctor had called and wanted me to be at the hospital the following day at 10 o'clock. That happened to be the anniversary of Anápolis, so it was a local holiday.

Early the next morning, before we left the house, we had a prayer. Then when I was getting into the car, the Spirit told me to go back into the house and read Isaiah 58:8, which I did. My heart overflowed with faith and courage as I read the words: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward." The Spirit also asked me to read the daily Bible reading out of the Sunday School book, which also spoke of being healed.

We got to the hospital and asked the girl at the desk to tell the doctor we were there. She wanted my husband to give her a \$900 check as a deposit toward the surgery. He told her that he didn't have that much money and that the doctor was expecting us. She talked to the nurse and she took us in and up to one of the best rooms in the hospital. We knew this kind of room was really expensive so we told her we wanted something cheaper, but she said the doctor had given her orders to take us to this expensive room. We went in and waited for nearly two hours.

When the doctor got there, he took some x-rays. My husband told him he was afraid he didn't have enough money. But the doctor told him not to worry, he would have enough.

The technician from São Paulo who had set up the machine was still there. He wanted to be there for the first surgery to make sure they knew how to operate it.

The surgery itself took just a jiffy and the doctor said we could go home. My husband asked how much it was and the doctor said that that day was a holiday, so there would be no charges!

I might mention that all of the urologists from that hospital were in the operating

room, except for those who were traveling. We thanked the doctor and then when we got into the car to leave, we had a prayer, thanking God for everything. The doctor asked that I come back for a checkup in a month.

When we got home, my husband returned the money to brother Luís Fernandes. Since the doctors didn't expect my right kidney to act up for a while, we wouldn't be needing that money.

It felt so good to be able to begin doing the housework again. I didn't even want to go back for a checkup, but he called brother Luís Fernandes and asked that I call him, which I did the following day. He wanted me to come back for a checkup. I told him that my husband wouldn't get paid until the end of the month, but he said he wasn't interested in my money, but rather in my health. Since my kidney had been in such bad shape, he wanted to see what it was like now.

After taking an x-ray, the doctor told me my kidney was normal. All the doctors who were in on the surgery were there again. They all agreed everything was looking beautiful.

As we left the hospital, I felt strongly impressed to send my experience to O Mensageiro [the Portuguese Messenger]. But time went by and finally I asked myself, "Why write? Everyone knows about it."

Now as I look back I can see this was caused by an ungrateful spirit. Within two months my right kidney began acting up. This was a difficult time for me. I didn't want to go back to the hospital, but when Minister Mark Loewen was out for a baptism he encouraged me to go and have the other kidney taken care of.

My husband called the doctor and set the day for the surgery. I really prayed and asked God to help me. But I was so filled with fear, that I couldn't give myself over to Him. I felt so weak. I wanted God to remove the stones without having to go through all this again. Brother Luís Fernandes got the money around again for us. We went to the hospital and soon were on our way home again. But I didn't feel well. During the following days I had a lot of pain. I thought that maybe the surgery hadn't been a success.

Because of my disobedience, I became weaker and weaker. Things of the past that I knew were taken care of began to bother me.

One day brother Antônio paid us a visit. After that I tried to pray, but even when I knelt, I didn't manage to say anything. But then a voice told me that I should get up in church and tell the brotherhood how things were going with me. For several weeks I couldn't manage to do it, but finally I got up and told how things were going and asked for prayer.

After the meeting someone came to me and said how disappointed she was that I was going through such struggles, that she didn't expect that of me. What would this do to my children and to my home? Satan immediately began to accuse me. "See there," he said, "even your brethren are disappointed by your behavior." So I looked around and sure enough, it looked like my brothers and sisters were looking at me cross-eyed.

But then I decided to try something. I decided to stand in the doorway and when one of the leaders came by I would tell them I wasn't fit to remain in the church with

so many problems. Satan was really gaining ground with me, but all of a sudden brother Luís Fernandes struck him down. I saw Luís coming to the door and I thought, “Now here’s my chance to tell him what I have to say.” But before I could say anything, he said, “I want to commend you for your victory!”

I answered, “What victory are you talking about? All I know is defeat.”

He said, “Just for you to get up and express yourself was a victory. It made me feel good.” Then he talked to me for a while. I was able to open up and tell him just how I felt. Even while in church talking to him, my heart began to overflow with love and joy.

At home I told my husband what had happened. We prayed together and I asked God to forgive me for my lack of faith. After I was healed, I was like the nine lepers who were healed, but didn’t return to thank the Lord.

The Lord spoke to me. He said, “It’s been seven years since you accepted me, hasn’t it? Did you think I would let you go to communion if you had sin on your soul?” I asked him to forgive me and told him I would write to O Mensageiro and tell what God had done for me so that He could receive all the honor and glory.

My brothers and sisters, thank you for your prayers and financial help, as well as for your phone calls. Pray for our home. I am very well, thanks to God. ▲

Zigzagging Around

Can You Change a Leopard’s Spots?

Last year 27,000 people died in traffic accidents in Brazil. World over there were 500,000 deaths, giving Brazil a proportionately high share. There is an average of one death for every one thousand cars in circulation.

We mentioned last month that Brazil has come up with a new set of traffic laws, touted as one of the most advanced in the world. There may be considerable truth to that. But the proof of the pudding will be how they are enforced.

Japan used to have a similar situation. In 1970 there were 22,000 traffic related deaths. Last year there were 9,640.

The city of Curitiba began taking this problem to heart a year ago. Awareness campaigns were launched in which traffic violators were depicted as animals. Anyone stopping in a yellow box at a traffic light is depicted as a tapir (a very ugly animal), rats run red lights, and someone who double parks is a turkey.

I just called Roberto Amorim in Curitiba and he said that the police are really taking their duties serious under the new traffic laws. A driver with a little too much alcohol in his blood was put in the jug, even though he had not committed any other violation—other than drinking too much. The case was given a lot of publicity.

Brasília has also changed a lot in the last year. Only the story there is different. The son of one of the president’s ministers killed a mason in a hit and run accident. A protest was staged with between 25-30 thousand people taking part. For the next

several weeks that was the hot item in the news. On the main avenue into town (you people from BN Tour 1 will remember I pointed this avenue out as we entered Brasília on the bus) 80% of the drivers broke the speed limit. Today that number has dropped to less than half of a percent.

Brazilians aren't incorrigibly bad drivers. Like children, they know what they can get by with.

Two things stand out in the new traffic laws: heavy fines and a point system under which the driver loses his license after racking up 20 points. Let's notice some of the violations, the fines they carry (in US dollars) and how many points they are worth:

Violation.	Points	Fine
DUI	7	\$772
Hit & run accident	7	\$772
Speeding (20% above limit) on highway	7	\$463
Speeding (50% above limit) city driving	7	\$463
Racing on public roads	7	\$463
Driving on sidewalks or median strip.	7	\$463
Running a red light	7	\$154
Wrong way on one-way street.	7	\$154
Passing in no passing zone	7	\$154
Making U-turn where prohibited	7	\$154
Not stopping for pedestrian.	7	\$154
Not pulling over for emergency vehicles	7	\$154
Expired driver's license.	7	\$154
Driving without a license plate on car	7	\$154
Failure to use turn signal	5	\$103
Following emergency vehicle	5	\$103
Passing on the right	5	\$103
Failure to use windshield wipers when raining.	5	\$103
Driving without a seat belt	5	\$103
Driving with arm out of window	4	\$69
Using cellular while driving.	4	\$69
Running out of gas	4	\$69
Littering	4	\$69
Driving 50% slower than speed limit.	4	\$69
Driving with high beam in town	3	\$43
Honking horn between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.	3	\$43
Driving without documents.	3	\$43
Passing a funeral procession	3	\$43

[Note: Under the current exchange rate these US dollar fines today would be considerably less. (January 2022)]

Those are a few of the items in the new traffic laws. Probably the most interesting is the one of getting fined for running out of gas on a public road or street. Needless to say, not everyone is thrilled about this new set of rules. But as traffic related deaths go down and driving becomes more organized, that attitude will begin to fade away.

Can you change a leopard's spot? No. Can you change a Brazilian driver? We hope so. ▲

Curitiba

A Bit of History and Information

[I received some pamphlets (in English) from Roberto Amorim on the city of Curitiba.]

Officially the city was born into existence on March 29, 1693. It was an Indian and Portuguese city in the 17th century. It was a trooper city [cow town] in 1700 when cattle troopers [cattle raisers] coming from Viamão, Rio Grande do Sul, stopped by on their way to cattle fairs in Sorocaba, São Paulo...

It was a European city in the 19th century, with its massive immigration: first the Germans, then the Polish, the Italians, the Ukrainians, just to mention the most significant in terms of numbers.

Eventually Curitiba became a modern city. In our century, global planning was adopted, first with the Agache Plan (1943), later with the Master Plan of 1965, implemented in 1971, integrating urban functions and services...

Today Curitiba has become an important trade center, offering services and new technologies, where industrialization increases in an orderly way. A city concerned with providing social services and whose life quality is renowned throughout the country . . .

This pamphlet shows a round, glassed-in library that has a lighthouse on top. Not only is it unique, but very beautiful as well. I asked Roberto Amorim about this library. "Oh," he said, "we have them all over town—just like that. In fact, there is one right near to where I live."

Very interesting are the "Citizenship Streets," which are streets that have been closed to vehicle traffic and, as the pamphlet says, "where municipal services, as well as commerce, sports and leisure activities are provided to save people the trouble of coming downtown."

Very interesting in Curitiba are the "biarticulate" busses. As the name indicates, they articulate in two places, making them monstrously long busses, ideal for mass transportation.

Brazil ¹⁵ News

Curitiba is known as the ecological capital of Brazil. Great care has been taken to keep the city as green as possible, which, needless to say, makes it a beautiful place.

Finally there are the 24 Hour streets, known as “the streets that never sleep,” in which the shops stay open all night. ▲

BN Tour

BN Tour II—Who Came?

BN Tour II got here on January 13 and left the 27th. Those who came were:

Christy & Joyce Gearig

Noah & Beulah Isaac

Bob & Polly Schneider

Merle & Letha Koehn

Walter & Lydia Toews

Clarence & Betty Penner

Rosella Yoder

James Yoder (staying here)

Wendy Penner (staying here)

The group visited Iguaçú Falls and the Pirenópolis Congregation.