

# *Adventures in the Kingdom of God*

*A sweet and motivating Journey*



*Cesar Emanuel Rodrigues*

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# Dedication

This work is dedicated to every supporter of the mission in the Kingdom of God, especially those who, with a lot of work, are still struggling to keep the faith and preach the gospel in the states of Ceará and Piauí, where I dedicated great effort, not only in the professional field but also in the work of the Lord. To my beloved Grandmother Elizabeth for her faith and dedication that somehow led us to be close to God, as a matriarch in our family's faith. Also my most sincere thanks to my mother Cassia for your contribution to my spiritual growth, for educating me in the way of Christ since childhood, and also

for being part of many of these adventures. I could not fail to mention my great helper and companion in the mission of Jesus, my wife Cristina. She was a faithful squire and was always at home dedicated to praying for me, and on every trip I was going away for she was praying and expecting good news. She has also often been personally on our travels using her abilities as a Doctor to serve and her mother and wife's instinct to advise and love every brother and sister who needed good advice, without that support it would be very difficult to continue doing what we loved to do, preach the gospel by making disciples.

A special mention to those who support us and care about us in this mission; your help in prayer and financial support are to the honor and glory of our Lord, may God repay each one with blessing beyond measure.

# Preface

The book *Adventures in the Kingdom of God* not only narrates the trajectory of one family but also challenges all families to do the same. It's a modern version of the teaching of Jesus when he said: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few; ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."

The couple Cesar and Cristina Rodrigues along with their son Jonas thrive in the kingdom of God and motivate others to also make disciples, just as the Master charges us to do in the Great Commission. As the Rodrigues family follows the Lord, they encourage others to do the same, no

matter who the new contacts are and what their opportunities are.

Wherever they are - Brazil, Panama, Mexico, or the United States - they're ready and willing to show God's love and plan for humanity. May we all do the same until the coming of the Lord!

Happy adventures in the kingdom of God for all of us,

Bryan and Jacqueline Bost

# Chapter 01

## Everything started...

This exciting story of adventures in the Kingdom of God was written to bring new perspectives to our spiritual life; it would not be uncommon to hear two versions of the same story. The fact is, they would all leave the same scent - The smell of adventure.

It all started years ago with a young couple with their two children, Cassia and Carlos. My parents were a simple couple with a very modest life, both hard-working and looking to grow. A gentleman named Ciro, a military man from a Christian background was always very friendly and



welcoming. He approached a person who worked with the electricity company; these people used to visit our homes once a month to read the electricity consumption and are mostly unnoticed. But in this case it was different, Mr. Ciro not only noticed the young man who was visiting him but also became friends with him to the point of preaching the gospel and taking the young man to be baptized. That young man was Carlos, my father, and here is where the adventure begins. Because of this great friendship, I am here today telling this story and all that changed my life. But returning to that story, Mr. Ciro was transferred from the interior of the state of São Paulo - Brazil to the city of Miguelópolis for work reasons, and a beautiful and powerful story would be about to begin. He and his family continued to be faithful to the Lord and Ciro began to preach the gospel to the nearby people. You can imagine who they

would be; the police, investigators, even the delegate knew the gospel and surrendered to the Lord. Our family was still in the capital, São Paulo, and one day my father went to visit *Ciro* in Miguelópolis-SP. On this visit, he was sure he wanted to move from the capital to this quiet city. It was a simple, peaceful place, with good air for a young family to raise their children. However, there were few job opportunities for my family there, but my father was determined to face the challenge, he resigned from his steady job with the electric company and started selling vegetables with an old van in a door-to-door business on the street, later this trade evolved to a fixed point in the city and God was generous and made my father prosper to the point of buying his own house with a place for commerce. This part was important because our family's financial health was a turning point in the

preaching of the gospel. After all, my father always voluntarily preached the word of God and continued to work to support the family while taking care of the church, an example left by Ciro and many others who served the Lord throughout this region. There were no exclusive dedicated preachers for the church and I always saw this as a positive point for mission in this region as the church prospered and continued to grow from place to place using the resources and people it had available. Proving that the lack of resources cannot stop the mission of the Kingdom of God, because the disciples will continue to preach, with or without resources. These lessons would be very helpful to me in my spiritual life.

So I grew up watching the Church grow and be planted in several cities, and I was also a witness accompanying my parents, supporting brothers who lived in neighboring cities where there was

no church. For years my parents traveled every Sunday to worship with these brothers and keep them alive in faith.

Soon I would be ready to leave home, as the time to go to university was approaching and this was a very radical experience for a young hillbilly from the interior of São Paulo to leave a small town to study in the big city alone. God was kind to me in allowing me to meet a family of American missionaries who lived there to preach the gospel. In the meantime, I had to live with them as a favor, because my father had suffered a stroke and things were not going well, as he was the provider for the family, who was in charge of the commerce along with my mother, who was not able to carry on with the business alone.

God was merciful to me once again as my brother made the difficult decision to leave the university to work in the family business and I looked for a

way to save money as well as a way to get a job. God blessed me and I started working at the university hospital so that I was self-sufficient in my expenses taking this burden off my brother, and the missionary family, the Grisons, were like my foster parents for a few years until I finished university. I was an Autopsy Technician working nights at the university morgue, my first job. Right after finishing my nursing career I was ready for the job market and immediately got a job to be the head of a health agent program in the interior of Mato Grosso, a state that was two days away from where my parents lived. This was the long flight to freedom, away from family and from God, because there was nowhere to congregate there and so I stayed away from God's path for a while.



# Chapter 02

## Jungle Adventures

At the same time, my parents did not stop praying for me and I know that the angels of God were around me freeing me from evil, as I went deeper and deeper, looking for work more and more distant and in risky places and the riskiest would be working in the Xingu indigenous area. An area the size of Belgium, within the Amazon, where we were in the forest without contact, isolated amid many diseases, such as malaria and other tropical diseases in the Amazon jungle. There, I worked with indigenous people from more than 15 different ethnicities, who had a culture and

languages totally different from mine. It was one of the most incredible experiences I had, as it was precisely there I would meet my wife, Dr. Cristina. She was a young doctor who, at the end of her specialty as a family doctor, went on a month of internship to get to know the indigenous health system and so we found ourselves on the runway of one of the points in the middle of the Amazon. It was a small plane for four passengers, but the need to remove the sick to the hospital made us fill the plane with 7 adults and 2 children. This was an unforgettable encounter because the pilot had a great challenge, taking off with the overcapacity plane, and I was in very good spirits, I laughed, telling the young doctor that the runway was ending and the heavy aircraft didn't seem to want to take off, and when we reached the end of the runway that was the forest, we took off, passing close to the huge trees of the



Amazon forest. The doctor held my hands so tightly that I can feel it to this day because the pilot recommended that we would only be able to take off if the weight was not too much on the tail of the plane and as the seats were facing each other I was happy to hold the beautiful doctor's hands and bring her close to me and narrate the takeoff. In short, a beautiful story of love and rescue was born, because this doctor was very important in the decision to return close to the Lord and follow firmly in the ways of the Father. We met, and it didn't take long, we got married, built a house in the forest where we lived in a rustic way, without electricity, with all the challenges of those who are at the source of the Amazon, the Xingu River. This story wouldn't last long, because after almost 1 year we decided to leave the Amazon jungle to live in the jungle of stone, the great metropolis of São Paulo.

My wife had a job guaranteed by her specialty as a family doctor, and it was no different for me; we started working in the Family Health Program, where she and I already had experience, but now with people from the outskirts of São Paulo's Capital. This was a great challenge, as the tranquility of the forest was exchanged for the troubled life of this complex city with its inequalities. Working in risky areas with violence, floods, and various types of pressure, fueled my wife to put her dream of living near the beach into practice. See how God had already been merciful to me: He had rescued me from the middle of the Amazon jungle and brought me close to Him, now I did not fail to gather; He had given me a wife that I had the opportunity to evangelize and lead her to convert, one of the greatest joys of my life, and He had given me a job doing what I loved

which was working in family health with needy people.

I will tell more about this story in the next chapter. In the meantime, I decided to go to another university and while studying Pharmacy and Biochemistry we decided that when I graduated, we would move to the northeast of Brazil.

From São Paulo to Ceará, another adventure began. It was like moving to another country, a new culture, many challenges, and many blessings were prepared, and we can't even imagine how God had already planned it all.

On my last day of final exams before graduating from the University of Pharmacy, we had all our bags in the car, ready for our 3300 km journey from São Paulo towards the Northeast. Everything was calculated for two long days of travel, as we already had a job interview with the health department of a small town on the coast of

Ceará, where one of the most beautiful beaches in the world is located. We were very happy and I didn't even know if I had passed all the university exams, but it was pure faith, stepping out into the unknown. So we left with a heart full of hope and that feeling of freedom took over our being. It was better than a vacation trip, because the vacation starts with a deadline to end and our journey was starting with no deadline, what a sweet adventure to savor. We went very well for 2400km, until 900 km before our arrival, our car simply lost power and left us in the middle of the Ceará countryside. We were 10 hours away from reaching our destination and, on Sunday, we found ourselves in the middle of the northeastern semi-arid, in a region known for the dangers related to drug trafficking. We had to find a way out. So I started praying to God while I found a way to make a phone call to the car insurance company asking

for help and I was surprised by the information that in 15 minutes they would be there to help us, I didn't really believe in this information, but believe me, God was with us, and in exactly 15 minutes the help arrived. But the challenge was big, we had a car full of suitcases and things from our move and it was Sunday afternoon, with 10 hours of travel before our job interview. So we asked the insurance company to take us to leave the car in the garage (in which case the mechanic workshop was closed and was opening the next day after some time closed). So God started to act, the insurance sent us a person who was the driver of the insurance truck who knew all the people and was kind enough to have the car received at that time by the garage, the insurance gave us the right to a taxi to continue the trip on the same day and he would be the driver of this taxi, and more, to fit all our things he provided a

bigger car to have space for everything! And so it was, we left at dusk, and at dawn on Monday, we were at our destination for our interview. All calculated and provided by God. We started work the next day and God reserved another blessing for us, which was the sending of the car, already fixed, to where we were, by the same man who had helped us so much.

Finally, our car arrived after 30 days, what a relief. We would be more comfortable with the car, as we had the desire to be with the brothers and as the congregation was in the city of Itarema-CE, 70 km from where we were, it had not yet been possible to be with the brothers. Here would start our journey in Ceará.

# Chapter 03

## In search of the Land of the Sun

What a beautiful history of Ceará, an enchanting land where good humor and happiness sprout around every corner. Welcoming and friendly people, we were literally in paradise. Especially for being in a place that had a beautiful “Lagoon of Paradise” with clear water, which at its side started the national park of Jericoacoara, a paradise full of dunes where nature reigned under the sun that shone for hours a day. What peace to be able to contemplate the sunset from a dune

watching it set into the sea, announcing that night could come and the stars could reign until the sun rises again. This land is known as “The Land of the Sun”, an imposing and implacable king. It would be wonderful if it stopped there; we were not looking for anything but we were satisfied with this blessing of enjoying it all and what reminded me the most of how blessed I was, when I was watching television, with the satellite dish signal transmitting over the traffic in the Greater São Paulo, while I was lying down in the hammock, I thought: at this time I would be in this crazy traffic, and here I am, after a day of work, lying in the hammock drinking coconut water. As I said: We are not looking for anything, but God has found us. He had already laid out his plan for our lives and we were the only ones who didn't know.

The plan of unintentional Missions of God was being put into practice in our lives simply and



gradually, we were always willing to work for the Lord, and a story emerged that would transform our way of serving the Lord in the mission of the Kingdom. It all started with a fisherman brother Manuel Alexandre, a simple, faithful man, dedicated to God who, when meeting with the leaders of the local church, asked for help to go to the neighboring town, because there was, in the countryside, his uncle, who suffered from cancer, and Manoel he wanted to preach the gospel to his uncle so that he would not leave this life without salvation. But Brother Manuel's wish was not received very well by half of the leaders who had a concern: and if he converts his uncle, who will take care of this soul that is far and outside our city? They understood that it wasn't just baptizing their uncle, but caring for and teaching this man, and that didn't seem like an easy proposition and they weren't willing to invest

in that responsibility. Not that Brother Manuel couldn't go on his own, but the call for help was fading and there was no obvious answer to the case. But look how God was acting, the brother's uncle was our patient, and precisely in this community, we worked at the government health center, that assisted these people, and every day we took this little trip to work, it was natural to offer to brother Manuel the transportation for him to come and go with us, as we already had this obligation to do this from Monday to Friday. So the decision was made and the leaders who were unwilling to help also agreed not to interfere, and Mr. Manuel began to go on this mission of evangelization. We also had a Buggy that we made available for Brother Manuel to go there with the support of another evangelist brother and the result was that the uncle was soon baptized. And he continued to receive Bible studies at his

home with visits from Brother Manuel and other helpers. In front of this house lived a young man named Agnaldo, who liked to hear the Word of God. He was serious, silent, but always liked to watch carefully and examine what was being taught, and compare it with what he already knew from the Word of God. After a month, our brother's uncle died, but the message did not die, as his family, wife, children, and grandchildren continued to listen together with young Agnaldo and his wife Ana, who after some time came to be baptized. So here was the Church being planted, a blessing in God's eyes, but a concern for the leaders, who feared for the care of these souls. But the Spirit of God already had his own plans and made this work prosper and those sheep were never lost without direction because God always sent faithful men and women to continue feeding these newborns. It was amid this

opportunity that God began to use me and teach me. He used this master fisherman Manoel, a simple brother with a big difficulty reading, soft-spoken and hesitant, who for many would not inspire confidence as a minister of the gospel of Christ, but he was the one God used to prove to all of us that power flowed from the Spirit of God which was shown by this man's courage to speak and not be ashamed of the gospel. He didn't give in to the difficulties and doubts of those who wanted to control the progress of evangelization. But yes, Mr. Manoel's goal was already fulfilled, he managed to save the soul of his uncle who was already in the Father's arms. But now we had a church being born full of babies in the faith. God started his work with me slowly, using me as Mr. Manuel's driver, then he promoted me to Bible reader to help Mr. Manuel to evangelize, and when I realized I was already preaching the

gospel. As it was powerful to see God working through my mouth and using my hands, my great job was not to hinder the action of the Spirit and let Him use me. At the same time, Mr. Manuel, along with other brothers, were with the work of the Church in Porto dos Barcos, where he lived, at the very beginning, meeting in a Public School with a small group who were originally from the Church at the headquarters of the municipality of Itarema. The Church did not have a specific purpose of starting a planned work to reach the small village of Porto dos Barcos, it was the need and difficulty of transporting all the brothers with their children twice a week to services, which limited the growth of the Church. Initially, they began to meet every 15 days, alternating with visits to the Church in the city, until they decided to become independent, and again this decision was surrounded by doubts and mistrust of those

who will take care and control, especially because the “group of the great talents” were at city church and were not going to be moving with them to Porto dos Barcos. They thought of a need for self-preservation or even defensiveness to preserve the original group, the feelings were diverse and very much based on facts from the past, when a group that strayed and stayed away, simply dissolved and disappeared! This was a fair concern, but the fact was that people wanted to receive the faith in their places of origin, and to preach to their neighbors and add them to the group was made more difficult when you had to transport everyone to another place for each meeting. This was how the church in Porto dos Barcos was consolidated.

We had a job to support these two groups that we were connected to, for obvious reasons. They needed support and it was a source of learning

for us as we bonded with many of the new converts that we worked on together in their evangelism.

One of these brothers from Porto dos Barcos, looking to plan a birthday party for his son, went to the neighboring town of Acaraú to find a craftswoman, there he met Mrs. Giane, who with many doubts about the Word of God, felt confident to ask these two brothers who were there to buy a son's birthday party decorations. Thus began the church in Acaraú. The city of Acaraú was the municipality where we worked and there was already the Cauassu Church where our brother Agnaldo was, but they were 10km from the city.

Giane was eager to listen and was very determined to answer her questions about biblical topics, so, as these brothers could not assist her, they sent us there. My wife Cristina and I had

good hours of Bible study while Giane continued to work doing her craft. We reached the point of understanding that Giane was a disciple of Jesus and our proposal to her was that if she was willing to gather in her house to worship the Lord every Sunday, we would have this commitment to be with her every week, twice: once to study the word during the week, and once to worship God on Sundays, and so she agreed. As her husband was not a Christian, she needed some time to convince him to allow us to meet with her at her house; and so we did. Right after we started the meeting, she had a very friendly neighbor, and she felt the desire to introduce us to Mrs. Filomena and Mr. Oscar. It was a great friendship that bore fruit. They were Christians, but they weren't meeting anywhere because of Mrs. Filomena's limitation who used a wheelchair. So Mrs. Filomena and Mr. Oscar began to attend



meetings constantly and asked to do it in their house where the church was hosted for many years. They were very hospitable and the fruits were arriving. Célia, daughter of Filomena, visited her mother's house every Sunday and began to participate with us along with her husband Edson, who was a Military Police Officer. One of the things that most caught Edson's attention was that in this first service he was attending, at the time of the offering, we decided what would be the purpose of serving and helping someone or supporting the church in some need, as we always did with our offerings. He asked if he could give his opinion even though he was not part of the group, as he as a police officer had seen a sick and needy person, so this offer was intended to help that need, after having the support of everyone present. This attitude of acting like Jesus, helping the needy, was decisive

in the conversion of Edson and Celia, who became faithful converts and attended the meetings. So many others were invited and were there with us with great joy. We, seeing how the word of God was reverberating in this city, decided to move from Itarema to live there, in Acaraú.

God was working mightily with a diversity of talents and their different journeys, all ordinary people like us, with lives and problems just like you and me, but with a light shining their way, they were fruitful and made other disciples.

This was also the case of our dear brother José Pixico. He was from Itarema, but as he lived in the countryside, he had moved away from the worships and cooled off in his faith for many reasons. One day, being with him together with my brother Manoel Alexandre, we started to revive his faith and remind him of the hope and

love of Christ for us, result: he woke up, with his wife, and said that like him, there was a large group of brothers who were no longer in the faith and had become discouraged, because of the distance and the difficulty of transport to the city, and we talked to him that we wanted to support him to start meeting there where they lived. So he spoke with Sister Emilia, a lady next door, who decided to warmly welcome the church meetings in her home. It was a blessing to see another group of Christians coming, and the Lord added every day many more who were baptized in Jesus' name.

## Chapter 04

# Born on the high seas

We had contact with many fishermen and their children and friends. They didn't have an easy life, as this profession requires a lot of courage, to spend more than 30 days on the high seas fishing without seeing land on either side, and living in a reduced space with 5 other companions; it's not an easy task for anyone, especially because they spent more than a month at sea and when they returned to the mainland it was only three days and they already had to return, and as the product was getting more and more difficult, they had to go to further afield, these three days were

not at his house but at the nearest port; days away from your home making it impossible to see your family. They spent six months away from home. One of these fishermen was our brother who went through this harsh routine but continued to work hard to support his family. He knew that as Christians we must congregate, so he started taking bread and grape juice every Sunday to worship God at sea, with his fishing companion who was very interested in hearing about the fisherman's faith. There were many questions and a thirst to know more about Jesus that led to his being baptized. In his rare time on dry land, we were introduced as he had many questions and I was invited to his house to study together, and so we did. I finally had a disciple made on the high seas. In his house, studying the bible, I noticed a not very favorable atmosphere coming from his wife, who was not sympathetic to

the study of the word because it was a different tradition from the one she had received from her parents. This made her a listener from a distance and from the kitchen she sought to listen and pursue our studies and examined to find reasons to prove that her husband was wrong in choosing it. As soon as we left, they began to debate, and so she, seeking to oppose her husband's faith, came to know the truth and was baptized. Like her husband, she had many questions, and after her husband left for the sea, I invited my wife to be with her and to continue studying the word of God.

Thinking about the difficulty experienced by these brothers who didn't have much time with their families, and seeing the possibilities of growth for the Kingdom of God, I gave the idea to the brother who thought about being with his whole family in this distant port, where the boats arrived,

and he could no longer fish, but buy some fish from the fishermen and sell it in his house or go elsewhere selling it. It would be good for him to be with his family every day and he could go on with the Church there, where they were, planting a job where there was no congregation. We decided to support them at the beginning with a basic living allowance and they had to work with his business to meet other needs. So it was done, and many fruits were produced.

The challenges were still big, but now with different perspectives. One of these fruits was a fisherman, who, being at sea, found himself ill with many abdominal pains. The vessel was in the early days of having gone fishing with all the fuel, ice, and food for that trip. The boat master was not willing to have his catch fail and come back for a sick person, as he was not the owner of the boat and his boss might not be happy with

this great loss of return. But the fisherman's health condition only got worse and he really needed to return, because it was appendicitis and his life was at risk. He rolled around the boat with many pains and days of anguish and suffering, to the point that he thought about throwing himself overboard and ruining his life. He cried out to God for help and made a decision: if he returned to dry land alive, he would serve the Lord. Sometime later they came into contact with another boat that was returning, and this one took the fisherman, who went straight to the hospital and was operated on.

At home, recovering from this horrible experience, he receives our visit. The brother, who was no longer fishing, and I, preached the gospel to him and he decided to be baptized. This was a challenge as he had his abdomen open from the drain that was still there. As a nurse, I spoke to



his wife who was not happy with this decision to have him baptized, putting his surgery at risk. But I told her that she could trust that I would take care of him by dressing him in a way that would guarantee the safety of the surgery, without risk to him, and I would attend the baptism myself. And so we went, to where there was a lake to baptize the fisherman, who was born again of water and the spirit breathed relieved to have gone through all this, and now at home recovering, he could go his way and serve the Lord who had rescued him.

# Chapter 05

## In search of a gemstone

Already in Ceará a few years ago, and with the joy of serving the Lord in our region, God was preparing us for a new journey, which I will tell you now: in search of a precious stone.

Piauí is one of the poorest states in Brazil, however, it has wealth that few people know about. It is a state of exuberant nature, various types of climates, reliefs, and cultures, but one thing that is only found there, and in Australia, is a precious stone called Opal, a rarity, and it was

something more precious than Opal that led us to Piauí.

During our visit to São Paulo, when my wife was converted, we met a young man, a new convert, who, like her, was taking classes for new disciples in the same church room. That young man was Albério, who years after being in São Paulo, decided to return to his homeland, Piauí, and precisely in the city of Pedro II. So, after a few years, he had no contact with other Christians around him, and one fine day I received a phone call from one of the priests of the São Paulo congregation, telling me that Alberio was in Piauí and that I was the geographically closer brother to him, that is, not so close, 400km from my house. But for us, it was a great joy, because the memory came to us that Albério and my wife had been converted at the same time, and we were ready to support him. This was the precious stone

we found in Piauí, our beloved Albério, a brother who, through him, we reached the city of Pedro II. As already mentioned, I dedicated myself to the Lord's way in my free time, as my main activities were being a nurse and pharmacist, so my free time was weeknights and weekends. So I dedicated myself to having a purpose, once a month, to make this 400km trip to visit our brother Albério, helping him in the evangelistic work in this city, and in various rural locations where he had family and friends. So our travels were an adventure, we left home with a bible, food, clothes, and a hammock, with the desire to help others. Upon returning, we ourselves were the most helped in our spiritual growth. This method was always used: support, equip and serve, but there was always a space of four weeks where people in the places had to go it alone. This was the greatest source of learning, as this space was

essential for many talents to emerge among men and women, which God raised in each of these places.

# Chapter 06

## Overcoming Fears and Challenges

In the beginning, the local congregation of Itarema, the oldest, did not see this work with very good prospects, as it had no famous name or someone with remarkable biblical knowledge, it was a team of simple and very willing Christians. But God was and still is in control of everything, and always supports his Church that can never be destroyed.

Of course, we have gone through difficult crises and challenges. Satan does not sleep, and he

always sows seeds of division and discord. Problems of sin have been a reason for the deviation of some along the way, but the faithful pass through the fire, and when they survive, they rise stronger and filled with the Holy Spirit, and follow its lead to obey the call. As the Scriptures say: nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, reviewing and remembering these stories, I see how powerful it is to give space for the Spirit of God to work in his Church. Yes, that was the feeling of each of these people. They didn't belong to a Church or a particular religious institution, they belonged to the Kingdom of God, His Church, so we never bothered to preach church to any of them, we just preached Jesus Christ, and being of Jesus, they were of His Church. And believe me, they were content to belong only to Jesus.

It was not necessary to preach against others, rather, it was enough to preach what saved each one from their ignorance of God. Therefore, I increasingly believe that helping people to come to Christ, and discover the truths and benefits of giving their lives to Him, is the way to success in preaching the gospel.

Investing time in people open to guarding this treasure of God was a pleasure. Whenever we returned, there was more thirst on the part of the faithful, and so they followed the path of maturation. The weak, unstable and disinterested had only two paths: to strengthen themselves or to follow the natural path of the parable of the sower, which illustrates well the end of each one.

Our purpose was simple and unpretentious, we just wanted to go on, and go on, imitating and doing what we learned from the master. Each one felt part of this body, there was no leader greater



than the others because that was the spirit to serve. Of course, there was respect for those who preached, and it was natural that those more experienced in the Word had authority, but it was the authority to be even more servant, it was a Christ-centered spirit, where one wanted to wash the feet of others. What a genuinely inexplicable feeling, a hierarchy that was completely distinguished from all the religious organizations that the whole world is in a real dislike of, but it was amazing to see outsiders talk, these are not the same as the believers, they are different. How nice it was to hear that people saw us with a certain sympathy, and this began with a striking fact: our offerings never left the site for our congregation of origin; rather, they were counted and allocated at the meeting place. We asked if there were any needy people in the community to help. This good testimony was a watershed for

the community to see that this group was not dedicated to making the faith commerce, but was concerned with serving others.

A story I never forgot was that in my years of working in the health area with underserved communities, working for the government, and providing free assistance to the population, I heard many stories, like that of a pastor who arrived at the home of a believer to stay and preach at the local Church. He demanded that the family provide the best chicken for him to eat. This was a very bad testimony to all the neighbors who heard this story and were outraged. When we arrived on our first mission trip, we took all the food we were going to need, and not only that, we took it with plenty to stay in the house of our host. So once a person said to one of the brothers who always received us: “now I want to see you be able to support a pastor,

they will eat all your chickens”, and the brother replied: “you are very wrong, these brothers of mine are not like that, they come here and in addition to bringing their food for all of us to eat, they still leave us things!” The offerings that were made always gave a good testimony and were a source of inspiration to show how God can work through his people.

Simple things like where to meet, where to sit, where to christen, were never a problem, as the solution was always right there. We meet under a tree or in a brother's house, sometimes at the public school. Baptisms were done where there was water and there was nothing more beautiful and inspiring than looking for a place with water to baptize someone. In the past, people went to John the Baptist to be baptized by him in the River Jordan. We also fetched water. This search reminded me of several stories where we needed

to baptize someone: one day, a man with a very fragile health condition, made his decision to be baptized, and, since there is no place with abundant water near his house, we decided that the best place to baptize would be in the back of a small brother's pickup truck. So we covered the back of the car with a plastic tarp to hold the water and form the baptistery with enough water to submerge the man, and so it was done, to the honor and glory of God.

There was no situation or problem that was not thought of as a viable solution.

Serving the Lord sometimes requires some special skills and talents, but without a doubt much more love and goodwill. These qualities must be in everyone who wants to serve.

The Kingdom of God is full of people of all kinds; many are simple, full of love, sinful, but willing to

repent, willing to serve and follow the master, no matter what price you have to pay.

Today I can say with certainty that the greatest lessons of the Christian life I learned were among simple, upright, and generous people, capable of giving their lives for Christ's sake.

Each unusual situation lived in this experience, seems something difficult to see these days, because we already have everything so easy and available in our Churches, that we do not even imagine all these difficulties.

# Chapter 07

## Born of mud

God works in our lives in such different and surprising ways, as it was in the life of Marcos, by Pedro II - Piauí. He was a teacher at an adult education school, and there he met Alberio, who would be a great friend, and from this friendship, many good fruits would be reaped.

Later, in another moment of his life, Alberio needed to grind food and take it to his father's animals, and Marcos was the one who helped him, because Alberio didn't have the grinding machine available at that time, and Marcos kindly helped him do this. work, so their friendship

created stronger bonds. A while later, they met again in a tourism and lodging course, and on this occasion, they had their first contact to talk about the Bible. At that time, the subject was about the book of Acts, and so they continued to deepen their friendship, which led Marcos to take part in Alberio's Kung-fu classes and to work with him in his restaurant that had just opened. From then on, Alberio “nourished” Mark's faith by offering him several Bible studies, which Mark gladly completed, and with that, his eyes for the gospel were opened more and more. At that time, I met Marcos and commented to him that: with this potential to study, his ease of communication, and variety of areas in which he worked, he would be a successful person in his professional life, and could go much further, using his abilities in the Kingdom of God. Soon after, I asked him for his contact, so I could keep communicating with him

after my quick visit to his city. We kept in touch by email, and I saw that he was diligently studying all the materials I sent, getting closer and closer to the Truth.

Our simplicity was a highlight for Marcos, he was always attentive to our way of interacting with the brothers, and when accompanying us on visits to evangelize, he already felt part of the group. I already saw in him a fear of Christ, because in each monthly visit, on our missionary journeys, he had contact with several different brothers, and without delay, he was thinking of giving himself to Jesus. His final decision came after a trip he took, and he nearly had a fatal accident. This made him ponder what his future would be like without having surrendered to Christ. So when we arrived for the next mission trip, and we were together again, he made his decision to be baptized. At that time, the state was experiencing a prolonged



period of drought, so that many rivers and lakes had no water, and we were together in the car traveling with our brothers who accompanied us. At a point of the road that was risky, because it was very steep, they all got out of the car with Marcos, so that I could make the journey alone to the low part of a large rock, which was difficult to transpose. So, as I drove the car to the bottom, Marcos told the brothers who were with us that he wanted to be baptized. The brothers had their eyes shining with joy at this decision, and immediately, we were looking to see where there would be water. Our closest option was the dam, which in this case was completely dry, so we went after its watershed, a spring that was the only source of water, also used by animals for drinking. When we arrived at the place, the fountain had a small water reservoir, but the inconvenience was that it was full of pigs that

roamed there, so that the water was no longer clean, but was transformed into mud. But Mark's faith was intact, so the question was asked: is there water, what prevents you from being baptized? And Mark was baptized in the mud. Hence the title of the chapter: Born in the Mud. Thus began his Christian journey.

After that, we keep in touch by email, studying together, and once a month on our visits. That was the way to keep our contact and keep encouraging the brother in the faith. As for the day-to-day of the faith, it was lived by each one in their place and this was an incentive to continue growing. Even as a young convert, he was willing to support what he had already learned, the church that had just been planted. Because of Alberio's illness, he had to travel for exams, and a few days later, Marcos was doing his first preaching to replace Alberio in this task. But God

is good because, since that day, Marcos has been faithful, supporting these brothers with all his dedication.

The Church began to grow and he already felt the responsibility to take care of this flock of the Lord. He knew he had a calling and that everything he had learned from Christ was to be divided for everyone. During this period, he met a brother named Álvaro Melo, who was another very important brother in his spiritual growth, a supporter in polishing his life and character. Our lives are marked by people that God sends us to mold and perfect us for Christian service. Who could imagine that we would be in the interior of Piauí, in a place totally unknown to us, making friends and brothers so sincere and faithful!

We only went there once a month to support the brothers in general. This was a very short time to do missionary work anywhere, as it was like a

drop of water in an ocean, but God had a purpose in all of this and made these two days we spent there a blessing for all of us: first for us, that we leave there full of motivation to see, each month, how God was working in the spiritual growth of these brothers; and secondly for them, because we left them with a spirit and hope that soon we would be together to continue studying and growing. They knew of our sacrifice and investment in their faith, leaving our homes and traveling to another state far from our families, to bring them to Christian maturity. They received these encouragements once a month, and we left with the blessing of seeing their dedication to fulfilling their part in faithfulness and love for the cause of Christ. The result has always been that missionaries, like me, who went out to help, and these simple brothers, were the most edified and helped in the faith, resulting in a double gain.

On one of these trips, I was fortunate to celebrate Marcos' marriage to Francineide, known as Fran. She was one of Jehovah's Witnesses before her marriage, and Mark had a very tough mission in his life, which was to show Jesus to his future wife. They had very difficult arguments over their differences in faith, but Marcos continued with perseverance in his struggle to bring Fran closer to Jesus. One day, he convinced her to attend one of our simple Church meetings that Marcos attended. She accepted, with a lot of reservation, but she went. When she went and saw this simplicity and the spirit that touched that Christian family, she began to understand what the Church was and after that, she decided to study the bible with Marcos. After many disagreements and struggles, more and more she was getting closer to Christ until she was baptized. They were having lunch one day and Fran, listening to a

hymn that said: “my friend, today you have the choice, life or death, which will you accept, tomorrow it can be too late, today Christ wants to set you free.”, she decides and asks to be baptized.

At that time, it was already in the rainy season and the rivers already had water, and this happens 5 months a year, in that region. So they went down to the waters and she was born, of the water and the Spirit. And in this case clean water, not mud as was the case with your husband Marcos!

The great mud is in our sins, but the blood of Jesus cleanses us from everything. I highlight here the words of Marcos who said: “I entered the water clean and came out dirty, but I am sure that, by faith, I went in dirty from sin and came out clean by the blood of Jesus, who cleansed me from all sin. My wife was also cleansed by the

same blood as Jesus and we give glory to God for that". Amen!

# Chapter 08

## Man of small faith

Believing that we have capabilities, or that we can learn special things that can be essential in the Lord's work, makes us have the false illusion that a super missionary should be very well prepared and self-sufficient in many areas, so he would only need divine intervention in rare situations. This feeling of demigod is experienced by many health professionals, especially physicians, that because they can have life in their hands and perform high-impact resuscitations and interventions, capable of bringing someone from death to life, can make them think about this



aspect of the autonomous individual - the demigod. On the other hand, depending on God fully, so that we do nothing, having a relationship with the divine in a paternalistic way, would make us stuck and inefficient. The contrast between dependence and independence must be thought in a way that we understand God's purpose in creation, and how God grants us certain essential capabilities for a dynamic and prudent life, in order to live godly.

How to live dependent on God and at the same time use our independence to follow our free will? God does not want us as puppets that are manipulated by Him. He wants us capable of making decisions, and that in these decisions, we have the discernment to order our priorities and choices, to give the proper value to the things of God, as a priority of high relevance. This ability makes us different from animals. From the

beginning, when man sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, he received the ability to discern between good and evil. Being able to choose the good over the bad options, although wrong elections exist and are known as missing the mark - the sin. God predestined us for good works, which from the beginning he prepared for us to walk in them. But we inherit this sinful nature from Adam, we have this inclination of the flesh that is always militating against the Spirit.

The expression “man of little faith”, coming from the situation that occurred with Peter and Jesus when Peter walks on the sea, reveals our condition and our duality of being carnal and spiritual. By walking on water and fully trusting in the Lord, human beings live a 100% connection with the Lord, dependence, and independence in complete harmony. When he loses confidence and becomes distracted by the environment and

many other distractions, he begins to live in disharmony and disconnect with our Lord. See that the Lord, by His power, can sustain man in a situation totally impossible for man, but the fact reveals that God did not interfere with Peter's ability to keep focused on obedience or trust; Peter simply failed to trust, foundering on the test of faith. Hence men of small faith. On the other hand, even a small faith could move mountains. Our lives are full of opportunities to test and approve or disapprove, our faith. It is very important to keep growing from faith to faith, proving that our God is good, and He is worthy of all trust.

God in His infinite wisdom and mercy would not leave us helpless, especially those who get bored in the Lord's work.

We always live a simple life with minimal comfort. We never need to go through hunger, nudity, or

extreme situations, we consider ourselves blessed for always having something to eat and wear. God has also been generous to us in making us pursue professional careers in healthcare, which are very useful for serving others and also taking care of our own infirmities. Today I consider my wife a doctor, my best health insurance, and in the same way, she considers me, Cesar, a nurse and pharmacist, her best health plan. In a way, this can represent a great relief for 95% of the health problems we have had and we were able to solve it ourselves by having this knowledge. This is very important, especially when you live in another country, where access to health care is not easy. It does not mean that 5% of the problems are not relevant and should be disregarded, an oversight and lack of assistance in a serious case can be fatal, and our simple action without having the structure and equipment

necessary to maintain our lives, in this serious case, would not be replaced by our simple hands. Thus, we do not recommend that anyone be without access to hospital care with specialized services.

But the point here is to be able to trust and understand, that the Lord empowers us and gives us ways to overcome the most diverse limitations, which we do not even imagine or which we see as insurmountable barriers. He moves us by giving us strength to fight and providing more strength through other hands when we need help.

## Chapter 09

### In search of something...

We often find ourselves not knowing what God wants to show us with some situations, and we ask ourselves: What does He mean to say to me? Our life is full of mystery and things we don't quite understand, riddles to decipher; we can believe that we will have answers for every situation, as if through parables, God revealed himself to us. This could generate an obsession with trying to decipher the mysteries and riddles.

On the other hand, it would be interesting to seek God's guidance through lighter paths, where each

avenue can be clearly seen, instead of following this path full of obscurity.

We never imagine that waiting or time wasted without acting in the direction that saves us could cost us dearly. A mistake in understanding a supposed enigma could lead to our downfall.

I love to think about the words of God in the book of Deuteronomy 29:29 (NIV) where it says: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

Our life and disposition should be devoted to following paths of light, not the dark road in a hidden walk.

Living with purpose and with clear goals would give more meaning to our faith and our pursuit.

At the end of the first chapter, I said that I had worked in a morgue as an autopsy technician.

This was an experience that taught me many things, how to have a different view of life and death, a different perspective.

In our simple existence, we have opportunities to witness good and bad situations, which are remarkable in our history. In my case, when I was very young, I had to face the challenge of trying to work out of a need for survival, as my father had been disabled for health reasons, and to support myself, I had to face my fears. That was a way to overcome obstacles, which gave me the biggest and fastest growth I could ever have. Situations that I witnessed doing hundreds of autopsies and getting to know each part of the internal part of the human body in all its entrails, and also its external part with its stories and contradictions. All of this made me think how fragile and worthless this life is.



In particular, I remember a gentleman, whom I took care of at the university hospital while on my internship in the nursing course. One fine afternoon, he told me that he had no hope of leaving that hospital and I told him not to have that thought, as the doctor had already scheduled his release for the next day. That same night, I received him at the morgue where I worked, he died after a heart attack.

I received people who took their lives as a young man who, when watching a football game, decided to take his own life when he saw his team concede a goal and be losing the championship and, minutes later, his team turned the game around and was champion, but I was already receiving his corpse for an autopsy. Tragic stories, fatalities, natural deaths, avoidable deaths, recklessness, and complete stupidity; the most foolish ways to die. Life and death are so

close to each other separated by such a short line.

I don't know the spiritual situation of these people, whether they will be saved or not, but one thing was certain, that was the end of this carnal life. For many of my co-workers, this was the ultimate end, with no future. But for me, it wasn't like that. I knew of the existence of the soul; that there were separated soul and body, to await judgment. I knew that this mortal body was dust and totally perishable, but I believe in the incorruptible body we are going to receive.

The apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV): “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

I knew these truths and so I knew that it was necessary to have hope in the heavenly homeland, waiting for the transformation of this corruptible body to receive an immortal body.

I knew that as the scriptures say in Isaiah 55:6-7 (NIV): “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

Many are looking for something they will never find because they are not looking for God, who they can easily find and He is so close to each one of us...

So they will die in their foolishness. But those who seek the Lord with faith and obedience find him through Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. He brings us to God.

Are you looking for something?



# Chapter 10

## the wreck

Let's talk about a peculiar event we went through. The Shipwreck. Since we arrived in the state of Ceará, there was a great desire to sail, especially because on this coast, it is very common to use rafts, which are a type of wooden boat with a sail, which is used by native fishermen to fish.

At that time we were visiting a couple who had moved to a beach very far from our home, and as they were alone there, with nowhere to congregate, we decided to support them so that they could continue steadfastly in the faith, meeting at home, and persevering in the way of

the Lord Jesus. Our experience with the sea was limited to contemplating the beauties of the beach and a few baths on the shores, I had never gone sailing with a raft.

One beautiful evening, when our brother's father-in-law arrived from his fishing trip on his raft, the idea of going on an adventure came to our minds. So our brother put the little boat into the sea, and the fisherman with his fish went to his house. We just wanted to take a little “walk” by the sea. We climbed on the raft, both of them with no experience, and started our short journey. Everything was going very well, we went out to sea, further and further away from the beach. It was a mixture of sensations: euphoria, fear, and a lot of self-confidence.

Our first big test was about to arrive. Realizing that we were too far from the beach, we wanted

to return. The wind was strong and the waves gave the touch for the emotion to be complete.

Our euphoria was about to turn to despair, and that's exactly what happened. Being 2 or 3 km from the coast, when trying to return, we were faced with our total inexperience, and a gust of wind hit us causing the raft to overturn, and in a second, we fell into the sea. Beaten by the waves, we could only see the underside of the raft, and the things that had been thrown with us into the sea. There was only one thought: survive and collect as much of the things that were around us. After some minutes, already realizing that we were alive and without any injuries, the question was: how to get out of this situation? Necessity led us to try to get the raft back in seaworthy condition, and this seemed impossible as the sail was completely submerged. Then we had the idea of releasing the sail ropes and

working with a coordinated movement, one on top of the boat doing traction on what was used to stabilize the raft, and the other diving, pulling the mast to tip the raft back to its initial position. This sounded complicated, but it was what we could try, or just stand there with the wreckage, awaiting rescue.

At that same moment, they had already spotted us on the beach and warned the fisherman, owner of the raft, who was desperately looking for another boat to rescue us.

We decided to fight. So I would dive and exert force pulling the mast, while my companion climbed on the bottom of the boat, forcing him to tip it up again; there were many unsuccessful attempts, as my partner was light and couldn't exert enough pressure to force this reversal. Our alternative was to change positions, as I was too



tired to be diving several times without success, and I was already out of breath.

So, with difficulty, I climbed to the bottom of the raft and put all my strength and weight on the end of the keel, while my companion dived down hard on the mast, and with a single blow, and by the grace of God, I was again thrown overboard with one blow! When we went out to breathe, our joy was to see that the sail was again extended, and we had reversed the raft to the point of being able to sail.

That's what we did, we raised the sail carefully and started back to the shore, and we could already see our fisherman friend halfway between us and the beach, coming towards us. How relieved we were to get out of that situation. At last, we arrived, safe and sound on dry land, with minimal damage to the boat and most importantly, alive.

This will be a great lesson for my whole life, we must always travel prepared for storms.

Theoretical experience, willpower, overconfidence, motivation, and other things were not enough to stop our wreckage. Let's talk a little bit about Focus, Discipline, and Perseverance.

This experience makes us wonder how our life can be a complete disaster. In fact, the experience with this couple would prove fruitless in the future, as they would eventually sink in faith. They lacked, perhaps, the courage to reverse difficult situations that we face in our Christian journey, they also lacked the stamina to fight when they saw the ship wrecked without any hope of returning to shore.

Even in our case, with all our unpreparedness, the need to survive gave us the strength to meet a resistance that we didn't know we could have.

God helped us and He was with us in our boat, saving us from that situation.

If we have a volatile and unfocused mind, we are always starting over from scratch, and throwing away all the learning accumulated in each growth process. It is interesting to seek self-knowledge, and most importantly, the knowledge of God, who knows us better than we do. These two things are more effective than chasing your tail like a crazy dog.

Self-knowledge is extremely important because believe me, we know very little about ourselves. Our intimacy with ourselves is so shallow at times that we are afraid to face the mirror. We're capable of doing horrible things, and we've been blaming ourselves for it for years, and we take it out on things that only make us worse every day. And like a snowball, it only gets bigger. But the truth is, we are in the middle of a struggle against

hidden evil powers that are enslaving us, and we, to escape from ourselves, I mean from our conscience that accuses us, we prefer not to look in the mirror, and to live each time more alien to the self-knowledge of who I am, what I was created for and what my ultimate goal is.

This brings us to the other point, which is to seek my creator's knowledge. I have to be honest here, knowing God is not a consumption dream for most, I don't see many people awakening and having the purpose: I will seek to know God, I will move heaven and earth if necessary to find Him and know how He is, and knowing everything He plans for me and for humanity. Where does this God who created us live? He must have a lot of followers because if He is so good, it won't be difficult to find Him, because a lot of people must be at the door of His house, so locating Him will be very easy.

That would be a naive, even genuine, feeling of searching for God. But who is our God? I remember the passage from Acts, Paul describing God: Acts 17:24-28a (NIV) “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.”; to seek God if, by groping, they might find him, though he is not far from each one of us; for in him we live,

we move and we exist... Acts 7:48-50 (NIV)

“However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: “‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?’

See how in the past many people were not successful in finding God and were also not understanding who we are, why we are here and where we are going to. They lost focus looking for various deities, spending their time and money on adoration, the fruit of their imagination or sculpted by someone's imagination. Here we are not going to answer these questions, but rather provoke the reader to seek answers that can help you think about how to follow your creator more efficiently. Because this is the starting point, you are here and someone made you. In this quest, our

opponent will try to make us emotionally unstable, planting all kinds of doubts. And the worst thing, to do and be fickle, to procrastinate on a complex topic, and because the overwhelming routine of our lives is more urgent, our quest for knowledge of our Lord would tend to dissipate with time. But on the contrary, let's be diligent:

Focusing,

Discipline,

and Perseverance.

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV) “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

The reading sequence of Acts 17:28b-31 (NIV), reveals the urgency that we have to follow our search, because the text says: “...As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead.”

Our brothers from that place got lost in the sea of their discouragement and lack of focus, and in critical moments, they did not know how to find the perseverance, to trust that the Lord does not leave us without a way out, when we seek Him with discipline and all heart. He provides us with a way out.



Let us pray, asking God to give us the diligence to seek these virtues. He will always be on our boat, at the right time, to rescue us from the wreck.

# Chapter 11

## Light at the end of the tunnel

In this chapter, I'll tell you two stories related to that title:

The first is about two brothers in Christ who found light amid a sea of darkness. They were in the remote backlands of Piauí, where everything was difficult and resources were scarce, but they were reached by God through the preaching of the gospel. And there we were, with the duty and the pleasure of feeding them the message of God,

transmitting to them everything we had learned from the Way of Jesus.

I remember that they were happy for our presence, which was not frequent due to the distance and difficulty in accessing the place where they lived. So we started to tell them that they two, as followers of Jesus, had a mission to be light where they were, starting with always being together, worshipping the Lord, singing, praying, remembering the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and that this faith practice of gathering together was a biblical teaching for all Christians. The first answer I heard was that for us it would be easy, as we were gathered among many brothers, and there were only two of them who had very little education and many difficulties in worshipping God because they were such simple people. They told me that they had a lot of limitations, such as knowing how to read,

sing, etc. So, seeing these difficulties, I said that precisely because they had all these difficulties, God had sent them a special teacher: our great 'master', brother Arteiro. A simple brother, perhaps simpler than them, who also lived in the countryside like them, but unlike them, he was alone, with no one around to join him. He was the only Christian in his house and in the whole neighborhood, but he did not stop worshiping God and remembering the body and blood of Jesus shed for him on the cross. Like them, Brother Arteiro could not read a single word. Then, Brother Arteiro began talking to them about how he did to worship God, giving details of everything he did, from how to make bread for the Lord's Supper, pray, sing, offer, to build himself up with the Word of God. An interesting thing was that one of the two brothers could read a little, and the other could sing a single hymn; so we left

with them an electronic device that, connected to a solar plate, was useful for them to listen to some messages from the Word of God and praises. After that moment, they did not fail to meet and continued faithful. Just as Brother Arteiro followed, with his electronic bible, as he had received a portable DVD with the books of Acts and the Gospel of John, and the entire New Testament in audio, so that was his source of spiritual food and of evangelism, as he visited his neighbors, using his portable bible to preach the word of God. His example was a light at the end of the tunnel for these two brothers from the hinterland of Piauí.

Now comes the second story:

Many times we are going through things that we didn't expect we could go through, situations that are so uncomfortable that it makes us be in

darkness, it's like entering a tunnel in your deepest part where you only see darkness.

We have to choose a path and follow it calmly until the slightest flash of light is seen.

Follow the light.

It gets stronger and stronger, and closer is the exit. I had an experience visiting a cave. Walking 400 meters into the cave, with a guided group, we felt that the exit was farther and farther away. The more you walk into this maze of random tunnels, our sense of location is compromised, and the culmination of the hike was when the guide, upon reaching the deepest part of the cave, said he was going to turn off the lights. Each one prepared for this, to hold back the panic, and the silence was deafening, and worse, we only heard the bats who were the locals. But what I want to highlight was the darkness. The expression “seeing” the darkness does not seem to make

sense, but on this occasion, our feeling was almost “touching” the dense darkness. The darkness was so great that there was not the slightest radiance of light from anywhere, and the most interesting thing was when the guide lit a match, darkness had no power over any light! The power of this light was incredible, and it made an impressive difference in the cave. What a remarkable experience, which would be completed by starting our return looking for a way out. The feeling of seeing the least amount of light coming from the exit is something priceless; you know you're still inside the cave, but the hope of getting out of this uncomfortable situation is so comforting that even your breathing changes, your body breaks into a cold sweat, and your hands don't shake anymore, your mind already reasons more clearly because the panic is gone. Many lives may be going through things very

similar to what I've lived through. Panic, darkness, light, hope, blindness, anguish, loneliness, discomfort, pressure. How good it was to see that light inside the cave and how good it was to be guided to find the light at the end of the tunnel.

Jesus invites: come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest... He promises rest for our souls. We can give relief to those who are panicked within the depths of darkness, and do you know what they will feel like to see the light...?

It may take a short time to get out of the deepest part of the tunnel, but for those inside the tunnel, it feels like an eternity!

But every pain and every tear is about to end and we will be with the Lord forever. Talking about salvation to those who are desiring, begging for rescue, is different from talking to those who are



indifferent, for not even being aware of the danger they are running. That's why we need to make our little light shine and pray that the Lord will help us to clear the hardest and most insensitive hearts that are around us. These could be our parents or our husband, perhaps our children or a dear friend. Everyone needs to be rescued from darkness for His wonderful light because He has freed us from the empire of darkness and transported us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in which we have redemption, the remission of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14). Everyone deserves this ransom!

# Chapter 12

## Priest for a day

Preaching the gospel has many surprises and unexpected things in store for us, like the one that happened to me in a location, tucked away in the backlands of Piauí.

We were in a group of some brothers who had left their homes for another missionary trip from Ceará, where we lived, to Piauí. Usually, these trips lasted three days: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as we all had to return to our work and family obligations. So it was on this occasion that we were visiting a community where the preaching of the gospel was viewed with great

suspicion by the residents of this small village of few inhabitants in the countryside. We desired to visit people from house to house, to invite each one to gather in the evening, and for the more open, we would leave a brief gospel message. The invitation was for a meeting where we were showing a film about Jesus, and we talked about the great love of God, in front of the house of a brother, who was our local contact. Early on, I noticed people's resistance to receiving us and really, even a certain aggressiveness against us. Listening to our brother, we found that the place had the Catholic church, which was established by German Fathers, who were no longer there, and also an Evangelical Church that was closed, and the reason was that the pastor had to flee the community because he had the reprehensible attitude of getting involved with an underage girl. Because of this, people asked us if we were

evangelicals, and so they called us as part of this pastor's group, and as accomplices in his misconduct.

My heart was not happy about this situation, and I decided to visit the spiritual leader of the small community, who had been in charge of the Catholic celebrations. He wasn't a priest, but because he didn't have a priest in the place, he was the one who took care of all the celebrations and traditions of the Church. I took my Catholic Bible, which I had bought at the parish in my town, and went to his house, who received me for a long conversation lasting several hours. It was a very long time pleasant, where he told me many stories, and where I told him that I was a disciple of St. Peter's Church, and with the bible, I was in my hands, with the photo of the parish in my city, I did several readings. The conversation was so good that, spontaneously, he felt the urge to invite

me to their celebration there at the Catholic Church. Hence the title of this chapter: “Me, priest for a day”. In fact, it was an unforgettable experience. Right after the invitation was made, we all went from house to house, inviting the community to be in this celebration, where I would be bringing the homily, I mean, the gospel message. It was a public success, the place was full and it was a pleasant opportunity to preach the Word of God. I told my brothers, who were with me, not to say anything and just listen, soon they would understand how I was going to deliver this homily.

And so I started this task of preaching and, looking at every image of worship that was in this Church, I did like Paul in Athens when I saw the idolatry they had, I started with St. Peter and followed by the Virgin Mary, passing through St. John, St. Paul, Saint James, coming to the Lamb

of God that takes away the sin of the world - Jesus Christ. I preached using, for each of these characters, a Bible reading with the Catholic version that I had brought, asking a young woman who always read the gospel in their celebrations, to do the reading for everyone. I preached the Word of God in such a way that, when I visited each one of them the next day, they no longer despised me as they used to, but were sympathetic to hear the Word of God. The following night, when I invited us to our meeting, which would take place at the community's public school, many were listening to us in the Catholic Church. The next day we had to continue our journey, but the seed was planted in the hearts of these people, and the example of how to preach to the different ones, was also in the hearts of the brothers who accompanied us and commented that they had never seen an acceptance of the

people listening sympathetically preaching the Word of God in this way. As the scriptures say in Colossians 4:5-6 (NIV): “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

# Chapter 13

## And the story goes on being written

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in mid-February 2020, we were visiting our brothers from the Church of Pharr-TX in the United States, which has an impactful presence in South Texas. On this visit, we saw the evangelistic work they do in this region, planting several congregations on both sides of the Mexico/US border and various social actions to help the community: such as building and renovating houses, helping people in need, delivering kits to children, supporting a preacher training school in the Palmview-TX congregation, maintaining a mission



center capable of receiving groups of brothers from all over the country to serve in this region. But as the pandemic worsens, we are limited to knowing more, and learning more from them about this beautiful job they do. With all this situation, we were prevented from returning to our place of residence, which is Panama. So, due to the impossibility of returning home due to the cancellation of all flights, we chose to cross the border into Mexico and stay at my sister-in-law's house, who lives in Mexico City, for several months. At that time our focus was on staying safe and waiting for a safe moment to return to Panama. And it was on this occasion that we had contact, through my sister, with a beloved brother, who introduced us to DBS - Discovery Bible Studies. This is the core part of DMM - Disciple Making Movement. This strategy was usually applied in face-to-face groups, but this brother

was leading online groups, with a focus on using English as a form of access to Bible study and through that access, connecting people to discover God's way. So we, with his support and guidance, started a DBS group called EWB - English without Borders, and we started inviting people to participate online with us once a week. Mostly our contacts are from Brazil, and at that time we were still in Mexico. The strategy was very productive, and because it was online work, we saw the possibility of expanding the groups, but we found the language barrier difficult for many of our guests to adhere to. Thus, we opened two more fronts: one with the same strategy, but speaking Spanish, it would be easier to find people who, even with language limitations, could understand the message due to the similarity with Portuguese. The other front was to create a strategy to follow with English, but

in this case for beginners. So we started an “English for Beginners group”. This strategy was different, as we used a song as the basis and a small biblical verse to address in the group, so that prior knowledge of the language was not necessary to participate, as 80% of the conversation was in Portuguese, and each one had the freedom to speak in either language. The focus was on understanding the central message of the music and biblical verse, and so that goal was being fulfilled. And it was so successful that we quickly opened the second and third groups because of the growing number of participants. These groups continue to the present day. In addition to having many people with us and many groups, we welcome follow-up and guidance from this brother, who, along with his mentor, continued to be of great support, guiding us and sending us written material, praying for us, and

keeping in constant contact. At that time, we were already in Panama, and thinking that these groups were an access to continue discovering about God and seeking to stimulate a process of multiplication. I was thinking of a transition strategy, where group participants could continue to have their own meeting in their own language. Thus emerged the groups by video calls through Whatsapp. They work like this: a group of friends, starting from one of the participants, we make a video call at a certain time, where we use a biblical text to read and apply the same process we already do in meetings (the DBS strategy), but in this case, we do not use the feature of having slides, what we have is visual contact with each one, who is responsible for having their bible or the biblical text, which had previously shared with meeting participants. Each facilitator, that is, the person who asks the questions and directs the

process, has to know the process in their heads or have a handwritten note, to facilitate the meeting. It's been interesting to see people who follow in the primary English group and also start their own Whatsapp group, like Eunice and Cassia. In this case, no longer because of English, but because of the interest in taking the word of God to other people. We still have a lot to learn by doing this, and helping people share what they are discovering about God is a good start.

We are currently in Panama amid this pandemic. We are not able to travel and follow our adventure, but God knows all things and even in this, He has taught us many things, including knowing how to wait, which is not easy for us. The adventure follows...



# Chapter 14

## We can dream

Dreams do not cost a thing! I would say that dreaming is cheap, gives encouragement, hope and makes us live longer.

I remember my childhood dreams; I wanted to be an airplane pilot and have the feeling of flying like the birds, exploring and seeing distant places, making new friends, and new discoveries. In my city there is a large dam on a river that divides the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, it was like an ocean for me, and every time I was on the bank of that river and saw that immensity of water, which I could hardly see on the far shore,

my mind was tempted to know the other side and even the various islands I could see. What would the other side be like? I dreamed of building a boat to cross these waters and unravel the hidden mysteries. Yes, it was just a dreamy child, contemplating the imaginary infinity and having the rarest and most impossible ideas imaginable. How sweet is the innocence of a child's mind, it can soar free and loose like a bird. With that in mind, I already had plans to build an airplane and I would start with the wooden boxes my father used in our vegetable trade; for this, I felt that I already had almost everything by hand, wood, nails, and hammer would be enough; it made me very happy, it seemed so simple. But there was always that person to discourage us and make us difficult, sometimes it was just someone wanting to tell me the reality and get me out of the bubble of innocence. How frustrating it was to receive



negative ideas and the feeling of opposition; I even pretended to listen, but nothing made me stop dreaming. The light of maturation increasingly shone brighter and brought with it reality, which was imposing itself, like a tsunami in a city, sweeping away many ideas and plans that were lost, or proved inefficient, or even submerged in the unconscious from untouched dreamy ideas, it was like finding a high, unshakable haven where the devastating wave of the tsunami could not reach.

After so many years, this dusty box of ideas and dreams is still there and added to the maturity of my years of well-lived career, and of many goals achieved, it is time to give life to this exploratory spirit.

One of the consequences of this was the decision we took in 2018 to leave everything behind, sell our things, leave our country, to live a great

adventure into the unknown. This decision already had a bit of sobriety, as it was no longer about a child, but a family, me, my wife, and my 14 years old son. As proof that the decision was consistent, we had a 5-year preparation. Taking care of topics such as saving money for the trip, adapting to a minimalist style, compatible with the life of nomads, we would live in a motorhome. We planned to leave the country and buy our rolling house and follow our nomadic destination, with a base of departure from which we would leave for each travel cycle. The country chosen for this base was Panama, in Central America, due to its geographic location and for giving us the status of legally permanent residents.

And that was how, in September 2019, we started the adventure. We definitely left Brazil for a nomadic life, right at the beginning we managed to buy our house on wheels in Texas, and we

already had a base of friendship and good contacts, from Panama to the south of the United States.

Our dream of exploration and volunteer work related to evangelization was taking shape, so that we could continue our journey stopping in each country in Central America and serving in the Kingdom of God freely, without a closed schedule of deadlines and fully defined routes. We did have a target to follow, heading north, from Panama, reaching the city of Pharr-TX, and in the cycle heading south, it would be the reverse path. Our commitment was to find a place to serve the Lord for a while, and to follow our route in safety, doing the same at each place of our stay. Our only limitation was the visa period of each country, the security conditions of each parking place, and our monthly budget to support ourselves without the need for other resources.

This idea was planted in our hearts, but we didn't have the chance to follow, because of the pandemic and things that made us hesitate before we got to "the road". Surely it was God telling us: Not yet! Wait!

telling us: this is not the way to do it that I have for you!

That's why we're waiting for the green light from the Lord, but we never stop dreaming.

It is only possible to dream when one closes the eyes of the body and opens the eyes of the heart, and imagines the scene, as in John chap. 04, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-43 NIV):

“Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you

get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

“I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not

your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”



Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true.

I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay

with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” After the two days he left for Galilee.

The spirit and vision of Jesus for people should inspire us, to look at the fields ready for harvest... They should inspire us, to seek out other peoples farther away than on the other side of our street... They should inspire us, to go on preaching and stay with them for a few days, giving them the knowledge, how to follow the Father, and then go forward in preaching the gospel.

# Thanks

It would not be possible to write every detail of this story without the support of each of our collaborators who together with the author left their words in each portion of this work. A printed photograph for future generations. Many special people were not mentioned in this book, such as their beautiful stories, from which we had the joy of sharing our love and faith. So it would be endless to report all the facts here, feel embraced, and that we also thank you for being part of our lives. We are sure that your story will be remembered by our Lord and your faithfulness to Jesus will never be forgotten.

## References:

All quotes from the Bible are from the versions:

NIV: New International Version

## **Synopsis - Back Cover**

Cesar and Cristina Rodrigues are Brazilians residing in Panama who decided to leave their professions to serve the Lord. He is a nurse and pharmacist, and his wife is a doctor. Together they worked for more than 20 years in the public health system in Brazil, where they had the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus.



His experience was to plant house churches in simple communities, with few resources, but with an open heart to receive the gospel. They acted in medical and evangelistic campaigns, their expertise was to do rotating support work, through missionary trips, while supporting seven small congregations they were successful in keeping and training faithful brothers to follow the mission of Jesus. This experience was so because they still had their secular work and did the work for the Lord on weekends and evenings. His area of operation was between 7 to 400km from his house; so they knew that it was important to empower people for Christian service, as it would be impossible to be by the side of each brother every day.

The strategy was so successful that when making each mission trip Cesar took with him a team that was supporting the mission and at the same time being trained in service for the Kingdom of God. At other times, he would take people who attended local church meetings but who had not yet been converted, and this trip was a great opportunity for conversion. In fact, many were baptized on these journeys; now we hope that these adventures will motivate new mission-loving workers to spread the gospel to follow this Journey.