

June 2004

Dear Pastor and Friends,

When I resigned as pastor from the Temple Baptist in Jacarei, August 2001, our desire for the church was to embrace Haven of Hope as one of its ministries, but unfortunately, the new pastor did not support it. After some time, some of the members noticed it and questioned the leadership on this issue and other concerns such as philosophies of ministry and other Biblical principles. As both parties could not come to an agreement, they chose to do as the Apostle Paul and Barnabas did: separate. Instead of dividing the church, this group of 30 from the 300 simply left, with no propaganda for others to leave. After many months of prayer and seeking godly counsel, we were convinced this group had Scriptural reasons to leave, and so we joined them. Recently, they asked me to be their Pastor Counselor and one month ago we officially organized as a new church. God has blessed with 8 conversions the last 2 months. Please pray for a place to rent. Presently, we are meeting in a garage.

As you know, for quite some time we have been seeking the approval of our city for our project of the children's home. This week we had a meeting with the director of the Social Services. She informed us Brazil's Government no longer permits children to live in a permanent housing situation, but only on a temporary basis and the judge deems the allotted time frame. She said she was not trying to discourage our objective, but some of the dynamics would have to change, primarily, a temporary permanence of children instead of long term. This could mean months up to several years, depending on the severity of each case. She also told us many abandoned children have parents somewhere, and the law still looks on the parents as the responsible ones; therefore, it is against the law to take children away from them, unless the judge so rules.

To be quite honest, I left somewhat discouraged. God knows how hard we have been preparing and organizing towards this end. We had hoped the approval would come soon. But then I began to sort things in my mind, and I thought of Proverbs 16, which focuses on the sovereignty of God. Verses 1 and 9 especially emphasize that men make the plans, but it is the Lord who answers and directs the steps. Our vision of 20 homes was gone, but the opportunity to mold and minister to kids was not. During the conversation, the director mentioned the possibility of working together with the city's daytime program for street kids. She has a list of 2,000 children needing a place. Our facilities could be the location for sports and workshops. If, in fact we accepted to do this, we would have the freedom to teach God's Word. It would also provide ministries for our new church members, showing the community it is just not a lip service of "God bless you," She explained the approval would be a long and expensive process, but we feel our participation in the daytime program would weigh heavy for our credibility. We are not certain which direction God is leading, but we earnestly covet your prayer for His wisdom and guidance. We only want to obey our Lord, even if it means going down a different path. We do assuredly believe He gave us this property to use for His glory and to fulfill many purposes.

We can see the hand of the enemy at work in many areas. Last month there was another incident among the 3 employees at the property, which jeopardized everyone's safety. I had to fire 2 of them so now we are looking for new workers. More than ever we need to finish the wall. Some of our churches have rallied behind this project, but we still need about \$7,000. Please pray for this urgent necessity.

While Satan has been busy, God has been busier. We just received notice from our accountant in the States, that Haven of Hope has obtained its tax-exempt number. We praise the Lord for this blessing and for the promise of His wisdom, guidance, protection, and provision. "Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world!"

Yours for Brazil,
Russ and Diane Dean