

February 2004

Why Pastoral Care Groups

Occasionally someone asks: "*Why do you invest so much time and energy into support groups for pastors and their wives?*"



Well for starters, over the past 24 months, the ministry of four local pastors suffered irreparable damage. While all four men were productive as pastors, they were isolated in ministry. Not one of these men participated in a pastoral care support group.

- If God designed Brazilian pastors and their wives to experience Christian community just as intensely and intentionally as their members, and He did...
- If, in order to grow in Christ-likeness, we all (pastors included) need to experience relationships of grace in an environment of grace, and they do...
- If the 28 plus "*one another's*" Paul cites in his letters were intended for Brazilian pastors as well as members, and they are...
- If Paul told the Ephesian elders to **first take care** of themselves and then to care for the flock, and he did...
- If Brazilian pastors, like members, should continually grow emotionally & spiritually as believers, and they should...
- If the biblical qualifications for leaders include a focus on roles as fathers, and mates, and it does...
- If our NE Brazil pastors and their staff are the target of the Enemy, and they are...

Then how does God intend for pastors to experience community on a regular basis?

The force of these concepts leads me to look in the direction of pastoral support groups. Brazilian pastors and their wives need to experience community in a safe place. A place where they can: be themselves, be nurtured, encouraged, helped, experience heartfelt intercession, and even confronted, when necessary.

Starting four years ago we have been working to provide a safe place for a core group of pastors in Sao Luis. We started with seven couples who met weekly. Of those, six couples still participate. Over time, they experienced life-change, and this motivated them to invite others. In 2003 the core group added five new couples. And starting this March, seven new couples will join our environment of grace. Best of all, three pastors have caught the vision to help bear the role of leadership alongside me.

"Before I came to the group I falsely assumed that I should be 24/7 for my church

members, I'd leave my cell phone on 24 hours a day. But not no, thanks to our study on boundaries," says Pastor Ernesto.

Pastor Odivaldo says, *"When my wife and I came into the group our marriage was at an all time low. As we experienced the openness and acceptance of the pastors group, we became unstuck in our relationship and we rediscovered how to dialogue."*

One afternoon over coffee I asked Pastor Walter, *"I sense that since you came to the PIB church your ministry has really taken off. What's made the difference?"*

"I don't really know, other than pointing back to the semester I became a part of our pastors support group. Since coming to the pastor group I have made peace with myself. Deep down I always had a passion for discipleship and small group ministry, but now I have added to that a genuine love for the men and teens of my church," Pastor Walter responded.

Over time, as pastors and wives experience group acceptance and affirmation they develop the trust needed to begin sharing their deeper personal needs. Their openness runs a gamut of issues such as: being buried in credit card debt, marital conflict, and the need for setting boundaries so as to not neglect their family due to over commitment to ministry.

Let me summarize why Brazilian pastors and their wives need support groups.

Brazilian pastors need direct pastoral care ministry because:

- The care of pastors and their wives needs to be intentional.
- It promotes a preventative approach to pastoral burn-out.
- Brazilian pastors and their wives need to experience solid, safe and meaningful relationships just like their members.
- Because it is easier to come alongside someone battling temptation than to deal with the aftermath of an affair.
- All of us, including pastors, need a safety net.
- Because Paul recommends it - Acts 20:28.
- Because God commands it! - James 5:16; Col. 3:13; Heb. 3:13

We invite you to share in our concern and passion in two ways.

- 1) Pray for our pastors groups in Sao Luis as they expand to include 7 new couples.
- 2) As God leads, invest financially in this special project designating your gift to:

Brazil: North Brazil Field Pastoral Care #6408-906

By doing this you will help us to:

- Underwrite air travel expense to our annual NE Brazil pastors conference
- Encourage pastors and pastoral support groups in neighboring cities.
- Underwrite travel expenses to Teresina & Fortaleza to minister to pastors.
- Sponsor training events conducted in te NE focusing on pastoral care.

Grateful for your prayer and support,
Samuel & Connie Gill

DISCIPLING BELIEVERS AND DEVELOPING LEADERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES