

April 2004,

Recently I shared the need for Brazilian pastors and wives to receive pastoral care. This month I would like to share the testimony of an American pastor.

"At seasons end I reflected on my end of the year accomplishments: Together we had seen our youngest take a bride and we had spent time getting to know our new daughter in law; I had brought a smile to my father's face by presenting him with a letter of affirmation displayed in a beautiful matted frame; I had a new lap-top, fruit of an end-of-the-year-sale; I had attended a renewal conference sponsored by my mission that blessed my soul and affirmed my vision for ministry.

Truly I had much to be grateful for, but just when I was returning to active ministry devastating news hit. At 1 p.m. the Thursday after I arrived home, I learned by phone that my father had died suddenly. That same day, at 8 p.m. a surgeon told me that I needed emergency surgery. For the next two weeks I ran on auto-pilot. Two weeks later after surgery and having attended my dad's funeral, reality knocked on my door. A deep sense of indefinable loss filled my soul. From somewhere deep within, anger began to surface. I couldn't feel the pain only the anger.

It didn't take long before anger spilled over onto the very person I most love and cherish. Graciously and wisely my wife suggested that I invite someone over to pray with me. She went so far as to suggest three names. Relief was nearby, but it wouldn't be felt for four more agonizing days.

During the rest of that week, God urged several special messengers to send words of comfort and care via telephone and Internet. My heart was warmed. One long distance friend went so far as to offer an 800 number for me to call at any time. What a thoughtful gesture!

But, it wasn't quite enough. I was in need of a personal touch from friends who were both physically and emotionally close by. Friday of that week, three friends came to the house to pray for me-my pastor, a second pastor-friend and a leader of intercessory prayer from our church. During their visit there were moments when I voiced heart wrenching pain, anger and disappointment. The indefinable pain, took the shape one word - LOSS. There was the loss of a family relationship that failed to grow deeper, and the loss of honor and respect before several peers. Also there was the loss of ministry dreams and the loss of relationship with a key national leader. When the loss had been fully verbalized my pastor invited me to take it to the cross. I did. There I discovered Someone who bore even greater loss and rejection. Our Lord invited me to give it over to Him. When I did, therein and loss lightened and my soul's inner storm turned calm and peaceful.

I have permission to share this testimony because this pastor participates weekly in our Sao Luis pastoral care group. His name is not hard to pronounce. It is Samuel Gill.

Recently I wrote to share why Brazilian pastors and wives need pastoral care groups. If it weren't for two pastors and a ministry friend, I too might have drowned in the emotional quagmire of my loss and pulled others down with me. I wrote this month to confess that I too need pastoral care and am grateful for your support for both us and our pastors and wives.

Thank you for caring,
Samuel & Connie Gill