



That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

John 1:9-12

The Light has Shone

Dear friends and family,

Merry Christmas! Wow! It is hard to believe we are already at the end of 2023! Our world has seen major changes this year, from rapid advancements in technology to world conflicts, and we can't help but wonder how much time is left before Jesus' second coming. But, of course, in this "in-between" time, we remember and proclaim His first coming 2000 years ago, when the Light came into the world! This is why we are involved in missions. This is why we did 4½ years of missionary training. This why we raised support for a year and a half and finally came to Brazil 6 months ago – because the Light has come, and His name is Jesus! Now, just as one of our theme verse says, "...God... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now, we share that light in dark places.



A semester of classes done

Since June, as part of the program with our mission, Joanna and I have each had four Portuguese classes per week, each class being one-on-one with the teacher. This has been very effective in helping us get a lot of Portuguese quickly. Our classes officially ended for the semester on the last day of November. In addition to formal class time, we spend a lot of time practicing Portuguese with the missionaries-in-training here where we live and also look for opportunities to participate in "culture events." Some examples of culture events we've got to attend are birthday parties, a funeral, and, most recently, a wedding.



Family Visits!

In November, we were blessed to be able to host Joanna's brother John, who flew down from Florida and visited us for a week. The girls loved the time with their uncle, and vice versa! Then, my parents came up from Paraguay by bus to visit us for a week in December! This was yet another gift from the Lord to be able to have that encouraging time together, and our girls bonded with their grandparents like never before. As missionaries who often move around, we treasure these times with family when we can get them.

The Light is Shining right now!

One of the unexpected things we were able to do with my parents while they were here was take a little vacation to a city 2 hours away where there are natural hot springs and water parks. We had a wonderful, restful time there, but the highlight of our little vacation was something unexpected that happened when Spencer went to a little store to buy us some water. As he was talking the cashier, she asked where he was from, as people often do. She soon wondered why an American would want to come and live in the middle of Brazil. Upon sharing our purpose of sharing the gospel, she shared her background as a Catholic and her current uncertainty. Spencer shared some of the reasons for his faith but began to feel the limits of his abilities in the Portuguese language. So, he left and returned with our fellow missionary, Rodrigo, a Brazilian national. Spencer was privileged to witness this young lady hear a clear gospel presentation in Portuguese, near the end of which, she began to cry. The time concluded with her expressing her desire to put her trust in Jesus Christ. Rodrigo and his wife will be working to follow up with her in the coming days. Praise God for orchestrating this incredible opportunity, and for our new sister in Christ whose heart had obviously been prepared to receive the gospel! Please join us in prayer for her in connecting well with fellow believers and for her discipleship.

This was such a vivid reminder as to why we're here, to give the gospel to whomever we can, but ultimately and especially to those who have no access to it. It was also a humbling experience, showing that sharing the gospel in a new language is a difficult task that the Lord must enable us to learn how to do. But, through Him, it is possible!



Up next...

Please pray for us in our upcoming travels to Manaus for our field conference and Portuguese evaluations (Jan. 1-18)! Pray that our minds would be sharp and that the evaluations would accurately reflect our progress. (See chart to understand how Ethnos360's language requirements work. We put our guesses at where we are at, but the evaluations will tell for sure.) After this, we will get to host my brother Anthony and his family for a week and then prepare to start Portuguese classes back up at the beginning of February. Our goal is still for Joanna and I both to be at the required level in Portuguese (Capable-High on the chart) by August of 2024 and then return to the States for a 3-month home assignment.

Praises:

- For the girl who came to know the Lord!
- Visits from Joanna's brother and Spencer's parents

Prayer requests:

- Spiritual growth and connection to a solid church for this new sister in Christ
- Clear minds and accurate results from our Portuguese evaluations in January
- Wisdom and direction regarding with which people group we should work here in Brazil

Thanking God for you this Christmas! Thank you for investing in and coming alongside us so faithfully!

All for His glory,
Spencer & Joanna
Abigail, Gabriella, and baby Judah (Yup, that's his name! 😊)



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