



“Planting The Seed”

Amazon Journal by Chad M. Miller

September/October, 2000

Pastor Chad M. Miller

Prologue: PLANTING THE SEED

About this Trip

Now is the time the Lord is stirring the hearts of many pastors and church leaders in Brazil to reach their country for Christ. God has chosen this time for a great planting of the seed of the Gospel and harvesting of souls for Christ. Picture Jesus' Parable of the Sower:

"This is what the kingdom of God is like.

*A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day,
whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts
and grows, though he does not know how.*

*All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk,
then the head, then the full kernel in the head.*

*As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it,
because the harvest has come." - Mark 4:26-29*

This trip, we are sowing seeds along the banks of the Madeira for a great future harvest.

Planting the Seed is what this mission trip is all about. It is our most ambitious mission trip to the Amazon River Rain Forest. Our sights are set on the Madeira

River, the major transportation corridor in central Brazil, stretching from the heart of the Amazon Rain Forest all the way to Bolivia and Peru. Our trip will take us down river 2,000 miles (equivalent to a trip down the Mississippi River from Chicago to New Orleans). Our goal is to take the message and good will of Jesus Christ down the heart of the unreached Brazilian Rain Forest. We will be holding 5 training seminars for pastors and church leaders at strategic places along the Madeira River. We will be teaching and giving out small group materials that we have helped our Brazilian brother, Pastor John Nunes, to develop over the last two years.

These teachings are transforming the lives of thousands in many cities and villages in the Amazon. Two years ago, Pastor John's church had no small groups and only 200 people attending services. Now he has more than 100 small groups with more than 1,100 attending. 75% of these people are new converts! And in December, these 100 groups will be multiplying into 180 small groups. What a phenomenal harvest for the Kingdom of God!

This mission trip has an exciting new ingredient. We will be bringing something to our Brazilian brothers and sisters that will enable them to go beyond the blessings God has brought them through small groups. We will be introducing and training the Brazilians in Interactive Discipling - our new mentoring program to transform those who have come to faith in Jesus in the small groups into fully committed and productive disciples. I believe that adding Interactive Discipling to the small group teaching and resources we have already shared with our Brazilian brothers and sisters will create a new explosion in growth for the Kingdom of God in Brazil.

Pastor Miller: "I have a vision in my heart and a picture imprinted in my mind about this mission trip. I see our team going the distance into places where there is a very weak witness and presence of the Gospel. I see us casting a vision of churches built on small groups and one-on-one discipling. We will teach, encourage, and bring new energy and hope to the Brazilian church leaders who are up against so many obstacles in winning their towns and villages for Christ. Most of the Brazilians we will visit are so poor that they just can't afford books or resources. I see us generously giving out small group and Interactive Discipling materials along the river to committed pastors and church leaders who will use and reuse these resources with a passion. They will actually wear the books out, using them for ministry."



Let's believe and claim the power of the Lord to raise the Harvest in the Amazon!
It's planting time.

Our Goal:

Our Goal was to send e-mail reports from the mission trip to keep you informed and praying for us. We found Internet service in Brazil is very undependable, especially as we got away from the major cities. We e-mailed when we could. Some of the messages were lost. Here is a collection of our E-mail Reports and a Summary of our trip.

E-mail Report #1: Who Said E-mail was Easy?

[Trip Status: Pastor Miller has gone ahead of the team to Manaus where he has just completed a 2 evening seminar on Interactive Discipling for pastors and group leaders at Pastor John's Church.]

September 28, 2000

I normally don't like calling things spiritual warfare when I am having difficult times, but this is the fourth time I've written this email. The phone lines and Internet service here in Manaus is very unstable. Each time I've tried to send it, I've lost the message completely and have had to start over. I'm convinced that there must be some spiritual oppression possessing this computer.

We had a great seminar on Interactive Discipling at Pastor John's Church. This was the second time there was a gathering in his new rented warehouse. He has outgrown his church. This new warehouse seats 600 people. The first night of the Seminar we had about 450 in attendance with about 25 pastors. John was surprised that so many people came. We had a great evening as I taught on spiritual transformation and disciple making. This is an area where the Brazilians are so hungry for tools to disciple the hundreds of people coming to Christ through their small groups. The second night we were surprised to see more than 500 people come back. We gave out more than 500 copies of Interactive Discipling. You can see how eager they were to use ID with friends they already had on their hearts. The spiritual hunger and passion to reach the lost is so strong under the vision Pastor John and his fellow pastors have cast. There is a powerful spiritual revival the Holy Spirit is causing. It is His time and movement.

As I talked to people I have gotten to know on my previous trips, I noticed how many of them had ribbon crosses hanging out of their Bibles. These were the crosses Donna Seaholm's aunt made that we gave out to the 100 leaders at the multiplication service last January. It reminded me just how special they hold us in their hearts. When I tell them that our church and other Americans are praying for them, it touches their hearts in a powerful way. They see us as their mentor in this dynamic new ministry paradigm of small groups. Many of them begin to cry as I talk about us wanting to help them and provide them with materials. It's humbling to see how the power of God has worked in these mission efforts.

A man walked up to me and Pastor John asked me if I knew this guy. He said, "This is the brother you prayed for on your last trip." Then I recognized him as Roberval, the young man who had survived more than 3 months in the hospital and a surgery to remove a brain tumor that the doctors expected him not to survive. When John and I visited him, he lay lifeless in a bed in the living room. He didn't move a muscle, just talked - talked about how the presence of God had sustained him through his ordeal. He gave one of the most beautiful testimonies of faith in Jesus as his Lord and Savior from that bed. He was the one of the 100 small group leaders who couldn't come to the multiplication service. I felt we were praying over a man who would soon die. I couldn't help but think about the Good Shepherd attending to the one of the 99. Roberval walked up to me, smiled, and pulled back his hair to reveal the surgery scar. Pastor John said, "He is perfectly healed." A smile and scar is a powerful testimony.

Tonight we are supposed to leave for Borba by boat (a 24 hr trip). I wanted to fly, but all the flights are full because this weekend is national elections in Brazil. They have a law that everyone has to vote or be fined. It's crazy. The rainy season has come early and the river is swelling. We will have to be very watchful through the boat trip because of the over packing of people on the boats and the currents. I doubt I will be able to contact you for a couple of days.

I can see how God has prepared the people for our trip. I sense the readiness of the soil for planting. Now we scatter the seed, pray God's blessing on ID, and let the powerful action of God's Word go to work. God be with all of you. I won't see you Sunday, but I will be with you in spirit.

God bless you all.

Pastor Miller

E-mail Report #2: Left Behind

[Trip Status: Pastor Miller and Pastor John have traveled to Borba for a 2 evening training seminar on Interactive Discipling and on to Manicore where they have met up with the Mission Team - minus one.]

October 5, 2000

It has been a week since my fingers have touched a keyboard. It has been a great and difficult week of ministry.

The great news is that our Mission Team and I caught up with each other at Manicore yesterday morning. Their twin-engine jungle jumper cruised in above the tree tops and landed on the dirt runway they call the Manicore Airport. The Airport is the open air unattended shelter next to the dirt runway. For the interior of the Amazon, this is modern transportation. The other great news is that Donna made it to Manaus and is in the hands of Pastor John's wife, Erminia. She arrived safely but exhausted. If you didn't know, Donna found out at the last minute in Miami that her Visa was expired. I don't have the full story, but she stayed behind alone in Miami, spent the entire next day working on the Visa with the Brazilian Consulate, and got approved at the last minute before her flight left Miami. She was put on a flight that took her to Santa Cruz, then to Sao Paulo, and then to Manaus. This is like flying from Houston to Miami by way of Chicago, with a stop in Sioux City. But praise the Lord, she is here! Today she will rest in Manaus. Tomorrow she will fly to Manicore (1hr) where Pastor Jason will put her in a speedboat and in an hour she will be with us in Bonfin. Don't even try to look it up on a map. It's a place where no Anglo has been before. We will minister to this community of 100 and bring medical and relief supplies to them.

We have met an English Doctor who is going with us to Bonfin and lead our medical work. God has wonderfully provided, especially a boat for this excursion. We went to the Mayor and he is letting us use his boat. It is a long and interesting story of Pastor John and the Brazilian Pastors wheeling and dealing through the politics and getting us a boat. It is really a miracle. No one has heard of a mayor in the interior helping out like this for free. And free is the key word here in this very corrupt political system. Donna will be with us by 9:30 am tomorrow.

Pray for her to join us safely!

After John and I left Manaus, we traveled by boat (20 hrs) to Borba. This was the day before the elections. People travel back to their hometowns to vote. It reminds me of the Christmas story – Joseph and Mary traveling to Bethlehem. Elections are a cross between Mardi Gras and jungle warfare. People are celebrating and seeing old friends. The Brazilian military is here with machine guns and bayonets, enforcing election laws. And did I mention they are arresting and hauling off people. It's a good time for us to lay low until the elections are over tomorrow.

It seems like the incumbents all lose.

John says he thinks that's a pretty good system.

We had a great 2 night seminar at Borba. We had about 130 people attend both nights and I shared Interactive Discipling. We were teaching about making disciples and a young man walked up as we were about to close our session. It was an awkward moment because he just walked up and stood in front of us. The Pastor of Borba didn't know who he was. He just came by and sat in on the seminar. He said he wanted to give his life to Jesus and be saved. He said he wanted to be a disciple. Wow, did we have a celebration. The whole place was ecstatic. We left supplies of ID and other small group Bible Study Material. Material is a great need in the interior. The pastors and people just don't have these kinds of tools to work with. We are giving it to them. We are giving out a lot!

We had to get down river and there was no other way than to take a short plane trip (30 minutes) to Novo Aripuana. I think it was a plane. It had an engine and kind of flew. There a pastor met us – Pastor Ribamar. I didn't recognize him, but he said he had been at our small group training conference 2 ½ years ago. He said our teachings changed his life. I was so shocked. He went back to his home, without any real materials to speak of, and has raised up 10 adult groups and 3 groups for kids with about 60 kids attending. He is multiplying all his groups in December. He has 20-25 people in each adult group (250 total), not counting the kids! Pastor Ribamar says that since he has started small groups, 100 people have been saved in his church. Wow! With tears in his eyes he shook my hand, gave me a hug, and thanked me for changing his life and ministry. I felt like I should have been the one crying and shaking his hand. I told him, "Why don't you come with us to the next town and I've got something new for you – Interactive Discipling. In less than an hour he had a boat to take us to Manicore and was packed along with his son.

It's great!

Do you know what a speed boat is in the Amazon Interior? It is a 20 ft. aluminum boat with a 40 horse outboard motor. Get this... we loaded our gear and boxes of materials in the front of the boat, filled up 3 gas tanks with about 50 liters of gas, crammed on board John, myself and 5 other guys, and screamed full-throttle down this massive Madeira River for 5 1/2 hours to Manicore. This is wild. This boat is like a speeding torpedo, dodging limbs and other debris in the river. I expected us to hit something, go flying into to air, and explode any minute. Maybe I'm exaggerating? Not much. What did Jesus say, *"There I tell you, don't worry about your life..." (Matthew 6:25)*. That goes for speedboats on the Amazon. We arrived safely. What a great trip!

We had a great conference in Manicore. More that 100 people came for an inspiring two night teaching conference. Denis gave a powerful testimony. It was awesome! Several other pastors from town were there and we got to build some good bridges with them and supply them with all the material they could use.

We are planting the seed! This afternoon we head for the remote village of Bonfin. Pray for us. God willing, Donna will be with us tomorrow. Every one is in good health and great spirits.

Pastor Chad Miller
Spirit of Life Church

E-mail Report #3: We Made it to Porto Velhu

[Trip Status: The Team has ministered to the remote village of Bonfin and traveled down river and by bus to Porto Velhu.]

October 8, 2000

The BEST news is that Donna made it! Praise the Lord! After making it to Brazil, the airline lost her luggage between Sao Paulo and Manaus. It's gone! But the wonderful Brazilian family who adopted her on her last trip took her on a shopping spree and re-outfitted her. On Thursday morning, she flew to Manicore where she was whisked away on a speed boat up the Manicore River to Bonfin. She joined us just in time to help us out with the medical work there.

It was great!

We are probably the first Anglos many in Bonfin have ever seen. This was a mission church that Pastor Dislei has built up to about 120 people. It is out in the middle of the rain forest, so remote that we seldom saw more than a single dwelling hut along the river bank on the whole 5 hour boat trip. The people were so glad to see us and we had a great time sharing our clothing, toys, medicines, and gifts. You can't imagine the joy our gifts brought to the people. Carol and her dental team, Melody and Denis, went to work doing tooth extractions. It was an awesome sight to see... and hear. Carol did great pulling teeth. Melody had everything prepped and ready for Carol to use. Denis held the light for Carol and sang and prayed for every patient. Pam took charge of the relief supplies. She got the best job passing out clothes and toys. As you might imagine, she was the most popular among the people of Bonfin. She had the kids and teens outside throwing Frisbees. She even taught them to play Duck-duck-goose, except they don't know what a goose is so John suggested they say chicken.

So they played Duck-duck-chicken.

What a riot!

We left Bonfin in a rush to catch a boat to Humaita. On the way back down the Manicore River from Bonfin, we had the most awesome lightening and rain storm you could imagine. Lightening cracked all around our boat. Wind blew rain on almost every square inch of our boat. We all huddled together in one of the few sheltered dry spots. It was a great experience because we knew this adventure was planned just for us by the Lord. We laughed and realized that an experience like this was making us friends with each other and our Brazilians for life.

Our trip to Bonfin had one very special surprise. Her name is Victoria. She is a British nurse working with the United Nations and we had her join our team for the trip to Bonfin. She is not a Christian. As we were telling her we wanted to ask the Mayor to use his boat for our trip, she said she knew the mayor, the corruption of the politics, and she all but dismissed the idea that we would be able to get his boat. We prayed. Dislei asked him for the boat and he said yes. She couldn't believe it! She was more than dumbfounded! This really opened a door for us to witness to her. She asked Dislei how he got the mayor to give him the boat. Dislei said with a smile, "God touched his heart." Wow, Victoria was really intrigued and tried to find a different reason. I looked at Victoria and said, "Victoria, he got the boat didn't he?" She was speechless. This opened all sorts of opportunities to witness to her and she really joined in as a new friend on our team. It's amazing who God brings in your path on a mission trip.

We missed the boat headed to Humaita because of the storm. No problem! The captain of the boat chased our boat down and in mid-river we hopped onboard our boat, passing our luggage from one boat to the other. This is called an Amazon River Connection. As the boats separated, we waved good-bye to Dislei and our friends. Our time with them seemed much too short, yet we felt we had gotten to know them so well.

Our boat trip to Humaita was two nights, 36 hours. Let me tell you, that's a long time to be on a boat. It was some good down time and we were able to discuss our strategy for Porto Velhu. When we docked at Humaita, we got a ticket for a bus to Porto Velhu for a 5 hour trip. You will have to get Denis to tell you about the ride. Before the bus trip, Denis rated our trip a 9 on the adventure scale of 1-10. He said if we saw an anaconda on the trip, then the trip would be a 10! After the bus ride, Denis turns to me and says, "After this bus ride, the trip is a 10!"

Pastor Gelson is the president of the churches in this southern region and is so excited to have us here. He has found us a house, prepared us a traditional Brazilian meal of rice and a black bean stew featuring pig ears. We were all hungry and dug in. A few of the ladies picked out the ears when no one was looking. I'll let you guess who.

Tonight we are going to be taken to several churches by Pastor Gelson to introduce us. Monday and Tuesday we have 3 major meetings with Pastors and church leaders. Pastor Gelson expects more than 500 in attendance at each of these meetings. I understand he has rented a supermarket warehouse to accommodate the crowd.

Everyone on the team is in good health and spirits now that Donna has joined us. We are all pretty tired tonight. We all send our love and miss you and our families. When the team arrived, they told me that the prayer schedule that Godwin made up for people to pray for us while we were on the trip was full. That means you are praying for us around the clock. It really touched me and, I'm sure, is one of the reasons God is blessing this trip so richly. We are praying for all of you. We feel like it is your trip too! I'll try to email again on Wednesday. I think we can have internet access here. If you want to write any of us, send it to rlvince@worldnet.att and he will pass it on to us. God bless you for all your love and care for us. It is making a great difference as we press on in this Mission Adventure.

Pastor Chad M. Miller
Spirit of Life Church

E-mail Report #4: The Walls Came Down

[Trip Status: The team has just completed 3 teaching seminars in Porto Velhu. The first night was difficult. It appeared to be a colossal flop. But little did we know God was bringing down barriers. The second night, the walls came down and we saw a great revival.]

October 11, 2000

Waiting for the bus. After a 36 hour boat trip and a 5 hour bus ride that was as scary as a roller coaster, we finally arrived in Porto Velhu and were met by Pastor Gelson. He was really excited for us to be here and had arranged a house for us to stay in. It is a very nice house, but no air conditioning. Some of our team members were a bit disappointed because we were expecting to have to stay in a hotel while in Porto Velhu. I won't mention any names, but it wasn't any of us guys. Actually, everyone on the team has been outstanding and their attitudes have been great under some pretty extreme conditions! If you ever visit a place like Bonfin, deep in the interior of the Rainforest, I guess you deserve a night of air conditioning.

Pastor Gelson is a friendly and outgoing character. If you took the personality of Eddie Murphy, Robin Williams and Liberace, rolled them into one and made them a pastor, that would be Pastor Gelson. He is a wonderful man with a genuine heart for the Lord. He is the president over the pastors in this region of Rondonia, supervising the 18 churches in Pastor John's denomination here in Porto Velhu. He has arranged 3 major meetings with pastors and leaders for us on Monday and Tuesday. He is very excited for us to be here and has put a lot of work into inviting any names, but it wasn't any of us guys. Actually, everyone on the team has been outstanding and their attitudes have been great under some pretty extreme conditions! If you ever visit a place like Bonfin, deep in the interior of the Rainforest, I guess you deserve a night of air conditioning.

Pastor Gelson is a friendly and outgoing character. If you took the personality of Eddie Murphy, Robin Williams and Liberace, rolled them into one and made them a pastor, that would be Pastor Gelson. He is a wonderful man with a genuine heart for the Lord. He is the president over the pastors in this region of Rondonia, supervising the 18 churches in Pastor John's denomination here in Porto Velhu. He has arranged 3 major meetings with pastors and leaders for us on Monday and Tuesday. He is very excited for us to be here and has put a lot of work into inviting a broad spectrum of pastors to our conference.

Porto Velhu has had a lot of strife between their churches. There seems to be a lot of division and distrust among them. In spite of that, Pastor Gelson's advertising of our conference has been a success. We had about 350 to 400 people both nights attend. But you could feel the effects of the conflict the churches had experienced. Pastor Gelson did something very smart. He picked a neutral church that is not affiliated with any denomination to host our conference. And in the opening praise and worship time, he let his overwhelming personality and love for Jesus become contagious.

Our challenge here is really a tough one. There is a lot of skepticism and distrust here. Pastors are pretty defensive about new ideas and change. Pastor John quickly pointed out to me one of the pastors he knew that would be a very key person if our teachings would have a chance here. He is a very good and faithful pastor, but he has strongly opposed some of the efforts of Pastor Gelson in the past. Pastor John and I have been out preaching and teaching for 3 weeks and we are getting a bit worn. But we really felt the calling of the Holy Spirit to bring our very best efforts to this conference in Porto Velhu. We were both pretty fired up when we got our chance to speak to the conference. I started with a challenging message for the pastors to boldly step into a new paradigm of ministry. It was pretty much a "both barrels" kind of sermon. Then John started talking about small groups, and after about an hour, John got the signal to wrap it up. We both thought we were going to get 2 hours for teaching, but instead got only half that. I was pretty down on myself because I had taken the majority of our time and shorted John. And teaching about small groups was one of the most important objectives of this conference. After the first night, no one came up to us to talk or thank us for coming. It didn't seem to go well at all.

Sometimes you just can't tell what's happening on a mission trip when you are trying to communicate to a different culture. On Tuesday, we had about 40 pastors and key leaders turn out for our morning session. I felt the same coldness among the pastors. But John had some great teaching time on small groups and Melody did an outstanding job describing how small groups could be used to help people make life changes. At one moment, I thought Melody had opened a "can of worms" with a statement she made, instead it opened up questions and comments that really stimulated some of the pastors to come together and talk. It was surprising.

A missionary from Canada we had just met that morning commented how surprising it was for the pastors to be dialoging like this. In an unsuspecting moment, these estranged pastors were engaged with one another over their

common passion to serve Christ. You could feel the Holy Spirit bringing down walls that had divided them. It was a great moment to experience the work of God through us.

Pastor John and I were really tired, especially John. It is tough work teaching and translating with enthusiasm. We only had a couple of hours crash time before tonight when I was supposed to do my teaching on Interactive Discipling and Denis was going to give his testimony. The attendance looked light at first. I was afraid that was a bad sign. But during the worship time people kept coming in until we had about 350 when our session started. I began my teaching time describing the process of change God uses to mold us into disciples and disciple makers. Then there was a real turning point. I told them I wanted them to meet Denis who I had disciplined through Interactive Discipling. Denis' testimony was powerful because they could see how God had changed his life and how he had won a friend for Christ. They got a real charge out of Denis' testimony. Then we passed out our Interactive Discipling booklets. It may sound like a small thing, but giving something for free goes against the common practice.

I've noticed how stingy leaders are and reluctant to give out material. I guess it is because printed materials are so precious in the interior. It was a huge blessing that the offerings for this Mission Trip provided us with a supply of material to give away. Because we passed out an ID book to everyone there, it really made an impact. Then I walked them through how to use ID. You could feel the excitement building when they realized this was something they could use. They caught a vision for how ID could help them make an impact in their churches and disciple their friends. The whole place came alive because this showed them we really cared. They understood our heart to help them win lost people for Christ. I told them the passion in my heart and the passion of my people at Spirit of Life was to stand before the Lord in heaven and see their faces and the faces of all the people they would raise up as disciples for Christ. And we wouldn't need a translator, but be able to speak freely how we had the joy to labor together for the harvest for Jesus. The place was really getting charged!

Then we pulled out the ribbon crosses that Donna's aunt made for us to give away as a reminder of our prayers for them. I told them how her health was poor and she had arthritis in her hands, but she made more than 500 of them as a labor of love. I asked them if it could be a reminder to them that we were praying for them and that they would be praying for us at Spirit of Life.

The whole place went ecstatic with joy.

Pastor John said, "The people here will never forget what you have done here. No one has ever come to the interior and given freely from the heart with love. You will have to come back in a couple of years. They will always remember you." We hugged people for more than half an hour.

For me the most significant moment happened next. The pastor who was the leader of the opposition to our new ideas came up to me and mustered all the English he could to tell me our conference had touched his heart and made an impact on his ministry. He wanted me to write the name of Donna's aunt who made the crosses so he could pray for her by name. I wrote it on the back of my Spirit of Life business card. There is a bunch of Spirit of Life floating around in this place now. God changed a lot these past two days. The seed has been planted. Now God will make it grow.

Pastor Gelson deserves a lot of credit for setting up our conference and creating an environment for all that God did. He had been keeping prayer vigils until 4am in the mornings before our visit, praying with his people that God would powerfully bless our conference. The prayers made a great difference.

Tonight, the team flies back to Manaus and then to Miami. The rest of the mission trip for Pastor John and I seems uncertain. But I'm sure the Spirit will show us what to do.

Pastor Chad M. Miller
Spirit of Life Church

E-mail Report #5: Time to Return Home

[Trip Status: God has richly blessed our trip and our team begins their trip home. Pastor Miller and John decide what God wants them to do on the rest of the trip.]

October 11, 2000

The more Pastor John and I talk about our plans to continue our trip to Rio Branco, the clearer it becomes that there is not an open door for us to take our seminar to the next state of Acre. The church in Rio Branco is a satellite church of Pastor Asafe's congregation in Manaus. We visited Pastor Asafe before we started our trip and he gave us his permission, but there was caution in his voice.

The pastor in Rio Branco is using a different small group model than the one we are teaching. If we are going to serve the Lord and build His Kingdom on these mission trips, we need to honor the work being done in the churches and not cause any confusion. Both John and I felt strongly that God was not giving us an open door to minister in Acre, so we decided we should return with the team to Manaus. It shouldn't come as any surprise that our plane reservations have been changed. God has richly blessed our trip. Besides, it seems God has a more pressing use of the money Pastor John and I would have spent going on to Acre.

The biggest need the pastors of the interior have is for training and printed materials. Pastor John has written some great instruction guides and studies for small groups. He shared with us how a man with an off set printer would sell him his printing set up and then John would train the people in his church to print their own materials at a fraction of the cost they are now paying. When the Holy Spirit hits you with something He wants you to do, it really is a no-brainer. Our team felt strongly that we could continue our seed planting efforts we started on this mission trip by enabling John to become his own printing operation. We had enough money to buy the printer and get him started with supplies. It is just great to be a part of God's planting for the Harvest. We all felt good.

We took advantage of every open door we saw. We made 4 major seminar presentation reaching more than 1,000 pastors and church leaders. We brought medical supplies to two hospitals whose pharmacies were totally depleted. We were able to leave major financial gifts of encouragement with Pastors Desli, Ribamar, Jason and Guadisee. We helped break the ice between a number of church leaders in Porto Velhu. And we set Pastor John up to start printing materials for the interior. Who knows? If God is willing, Pastor John may even start the first Christian Resource Publishing House for the Amazon Interior. Wouldn't that be great!

We all felt a strong confirmation from the Spirit. It was time to return home and begin praying for the harvest God will raise up from our Mission Trip's efforts. It's been a great trip. Praise the Lord!

Pastor Chad M. Miller
Spirit of Life Church

Final Report

It was an amazing trip. We traveled by double-decker riverboats, small aluminum outboards, twin engine planes, old jalopy cars, and buses; using whatever transportation we could find to make it more than 1,500 miles through the interior of the Amazon Rain Forest. It is an awesome place. Just beyond the banks of the rivers we traveled are vast unexplored regions of dense Rain Forest which still protect indigenous Indian tribes and some of the greatest undiscovered secrets of God's wonderful creation. The Gospel is new to the Rain Forest. Less than 7% of the towns and villages have a Gospel presence. That is changing.

Just like Jesus' Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:26-29, pioneering pastors are taking the seed of the Gospel into the Rain Forest. Our mission trip is about helping them with training, resources and encouragement to scatter the Seed for an Amazon Harvest. We have been laying the groundwork, building relationships, and sharing church growth teaching for more than 2 ½ years with Pastor John Nunes and a network of these pioneering pastors. This trip we took a new disciple making resource, Interactive Discipling, and scattered it like seed along the Amazon's tributaries.

We held 4 major teaching conferences - reaching more than 1,000 pastors and church leaders and giving out more than 1,500 copies of Interactive Discipling and hundreds of copies of Pastor John's materials. We continued the training we have been doing on previous mission trips in using small groups to reach unchurched people. The results are staggering! In just 2½ years, Pastor John's church has grown 400%. 3 other pastors, Ailton, Desli and Ribamar have seen their congregations grow more than 133% by using small groups to reach unchurched people in their towns. And this trip, we brought a new tool to help these pastors disciple all the new converts coming into their groups – Interactive Discipling. We not only showed them how to use Interactive Discipling, we gave them copies to work with.

Our team also traveled up the Manicore River to the remote village of Bonfin bringing relief supplies, medical care and the love of Jesus. We are the first Anglos that people of Bonfin have ever seen. Pastor Desli has just finished building the church in Bonfin. He says all but a couple of the 120 people who live in the village have been won to Christ and belong to the church. Our visit will help Pastor Desli's efforts to reach other villages just beyond Bonfin. None of them currently have a church or a Gospel witness.

One of the greatest needs of the pastors of the Interior is for printed material. When we gave out material, it was like treasure to pastors and church leaders. Pastor John shared how expensive it was to buy material. He told us he had been praying that the Lord would provide him with the money to get an offset printer. He would train the people in his church to use it and start printing material for the people of the Interior at a fraction of the current cost. Our Mission Team knew God was calling us to help. We helped Pastor John get the printer. I just got word he is already printing materials with it. The seed is being sown.

Your prayers and support made our Mission Trip possible. You helped us plant the seed. Now God will do something miraculous on the banks of the Amazon and its tributaries.

It's what Jesus was describing in The Parable of the Sower:

"This is what the kingdom of God is like.

*A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day,
whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts
and grows, though he does not know how.*

*All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk,
then the head, then the full kernel in the head.*

*As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it,
because the harvest has come." - Mark 4:26-29*

Now, let's pray for the harvest.

© Pastor Miller, Spirit of Life Church 2000