Landing in a Sea of Skyscrapers

Leonard Strydom 30 July 2019



Ten of us, who live in and are part of the Joshua Generation Church Stellenbosch congregation where I am one of the leaders, mostly walk or cycle to where we want to be. There are no traffic lights here, only circles and stop signs. When we go to one of our local supermarkets, there's a good chance that we'll see each other there. We love it here, but take our word for it when we say that it's tiny.

São Paulo, on the other hand, is enormous! You get around by jumping on the metro or taking an Uber, or by using an app to unlock an electric scooter conveniently parked next to the road...they're everywhere you go! It's a different world: 175 000 people in Stellenbosch compared to 23 455 000 in Sao Paulo. Oh, and most of the people don't speak English or Afrikaans, they speak Portuguese!

> We preached, prayed, evangelised, laughed, cried, worshipped and played a lot of table tennis!

You can imagine the looks on the faces of the 8 Stellenbosch University students who my wife and I went to fetch at the airport train station very early on the morning of the 2nd of July (we had arrived in Brazil a little while before them). They had just arrived after many hours of travelling and came in to land in between what looks like a sea of skyscrapers. Welcome to the city!

Fast forward two weeks, and I'm amazed at the work that God has done in and through this wonderful team of 'small towners'. We now know that we have family in São Paulo, Porto Ferreira, Monte Mor and Campinas! We preached, prayed, evangelised, laughed, cried, worshipped and played a lot of table tennis! Above all, we came back with a better understanding of the words of Jesus who said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).

> I learned that my environment and what I have to offer does not have to perfect before I'm able to share it with others.

Read what some of the team had to say about their time in Brazil:

'A while ago, I received a prophetic word about how one day the Lord will use me and my house for the purposes of the church. I didn't know what that meant until I went to Brazil. There, I saw how the people opened their hearts and homes to bless us. They went out of their way to show us the city and to help us with transport. They shared their experiences, feelings, thoughts and opinions with us freely. Through all this, the Lord showed me what He wants of me. It felt like He said to me: "Look at what they are doing and do the same". I now have such a desire to open my home for the purposes and people of the church, and to copy the way the people of Brazil received us! (Caitlin Venter)

'I learned to trust God more in the moment and to not worry so much about planning beforehand (this coming from an engineering student!). I learned to really seek Him during worship and to praise the Lord fully. I experienced first-hand that followers of Jesus are really our brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what culture they come from or the language they speak.' (Andre Roux)

'The hospitality I experienced in Brazil really inspired me to be more hospitable here in South Africa. I learned that my environment and what I have to offer does not have to perfect before I'm able to share it with others. It really doesn't matter how much we are able to give; what matters much more is the warmth and heart with which we provide the little that we might think we have. It was also very striking to see that because Christ is our common denominator, and He transcends any culture or language, we were able to easily share our meals, our personal space and even our lives. We are family!' (Karla Strydom)

God desires for His people to be a 'priesthood of all believers' (1 Peter 2:5). Through this trip, I saw God using and transforming ordinary people as they put up their hands to go for His names' sake. Most of them don't earn salaries, they don't all come from wealthy families, and one of them had never been on an aeroplane before this trip. Still, they put their faith in God, and they

were not disappointed! I wish I could tell you more about how each of them grew spiritually or about how God used each of them more than anticipated. I'd rather end by saying that I am trusting that their faith would inspire you to do the same, to go into all the earth! What's stopping you?