

How Brazil's Revival is Transforming the Nation

More than 10 years ago I was in search of hot spots for revival. I'd seen Argentina aflame with revival fires years before, but after returning from a trip there, I headed to Brazil in 2001. I was so impressed with the hunger for the presence of God that I told my travel assistant, "The wave of revival is ending in Argentina, but the wave of revival is just getting started in Brazil. I am going to catch this wave and ride it."

I've been riding that wave of revival in Brazil ever since, traveling to Brazil an average of 50 to 60 days a year, ministering in many denominations and new church movements all over the country.

Today about 90 percent of Brazilians have a religion, with 83 percent indicating they consider religion very important. This is a higher percentage than in the United States and one of the highest of any country in the world. Many Brazilian pastors believe the Brazilian church's role is to become in the 21st century what the United States was in the 19th century—the No. 1 country for sending missionaries. This should not surprise us, for revival history reveals that wherever revival is strongest, there is a commensurate commitment to missions.

My experience has revealed a three-fold emphasis in the Brazilian churches where I've ministered: 1) an emphasis on the supernatural with healing and deliverance prominent in the life of the churches and their members; 2) an emphasis on powerful worship (with the songs written by Brazilians instead of North Americans); and 3) an emphasis on cell groups, through which the people are evangelized, assimilated and disciplined.

Part of this discipleship through cell groups includes a weekend experience away from a church's premises—a time for new converts to experience inner healing, deliverance and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It also provides a time for them to hear the vision of the church and learn that every convert is to become a discipler of others. These weekends, called "Encounters," emphasize the importance of experience in the life of every believer. (We must ask ourselves if our assimilation events would accurately be called "encounters" or if they more accurately would be called "informers".)

Fruit of Brazil's Revival

Every true revival produces lasting fruit, and in the case of the Holy Spirit's ongoing move in Brazil, I've seen four distinct fruits that have become readily apparent.

First, there is a general openness to and expectation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit among the population, especially among the younger generation.

Second, the percentage of Protestants has dramatically shifted. Brazil is the world's most Roman Catholic country. However, in only a few years evangelicals have gone from being a small segment to a major portion of the overall population. SEPAL (Servicio Evangelizador Para America Latina), a respected Christian organization in Brazil, expected there to be 57.4 million active evangelical Christians in Brazil last year, representing an annual growth rate of has influenced church growth in Brazil. SEPAL researchers believe 52 percent of the population of Brazil will be active evangelical Christians by 2020, or about 109.3 million evangelicals within a total population of 209.3 million.

The third fruit is the media shift in representing this revival. Mass media that were once critical of evangelicals are now more favorable to representing them fairly, especially on television. Brazil's main TV network, Rede Globo, recently

started a monthly revival worship festival in its prime time called *Promises* that features only prominent Brazilian Christian artists. This is an unprecedented move in the history of the country.

Finally, evangelicals' influence in the political realm continues to grow, which has brought pressure on the political process to stop laws that would be unrighteous and open the door to immorality. Though Brazil legalized same-sex unions in 2011 and continues to debate the issue of abortion, the evangelical voice is louder than ever—and is being heard in the Senate halls. Earlier this year, thousands of evangelicals gathered in Brasília to express their opposition to the legalization of abortion and gay marriage. In May, a Rio de Janeiro March for Jesus rally of 250,000-plus included a protest against a bill that would essentially make it illegal to speak out against homosexuality. And in July, more than 1 million attended São Paulo's March for Jesus rally.

Having considered two fruits reflected in the secular realm, let us return to our first two fruits relating more to the churches of Brazil.

Growing Through Healing

In 2002 I went to Água Viva, a Baptist church of 300 people in the city of Mauá. There was a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit with hundreds of healings, including most of the staff. Today the church has 4,000 members, with more than 14,000 attending its 20 daughter churches.

When other Baptist churches asked pastor Silvio Galli about the rapid growth, he said, "You know those things you don't like? They are the reason." The "things" he was referring to were the gifts of the Holy Spirit—and in particular, healing.

In Belo Horizonte, pastor Márcio Valadão pastors 50,000 members at the Baptist church he started, Igreja Batista da Lagoinha (Lagoinha Baptist Church). The sanctuary seats "only"

7,000, so the church holds seven services on Sunday. Their goal is to build a sanctuary that will seat 50,000. I have spoken in this church and at its ministry school several times. They see many healings, and the worship team is so popular that crowds of more than 1 million fill the grand pavilions and streets for worship events led by the Lagoinha team.

In the same city, pastor Paulo Mazoni leads Igreja Batista Central (Central Baptist Church). When my ministry team first went there, the church averaged hundreds in attendance; they now have more than 4,000 members. This is a highly educated church with people from the upper level of society in its membership, yet the church is very open to all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, putting an emphasis on healing ministry, experiencing God in worship and seeing people filled with the Spirit.

The pastor's sister is a psychologist. She witnessed so many healings through our team on our first visit that she resigned from her practice to establish a ministry team at the local church and oversee the healing ministries of the local church. She told me many more people were healed when they put into practice the teaching of our *Ministry Team Training Manual*.

About 12 years ago, I went to Igreja Videira (Vineyard Church, though it isn't part of the Vineyard USA movement) in Goiania. Pastor Aluizio A. Silva had started the church three years earlier with a congregation of 3,000. It now has 20,000 members, not counting the churches associated with his extensive network. A few months ago the church had a citywide gathering at an arena where I was honored to preach to a packed auditorium of about 20,500. We saw many healings and salvations.

People who had been paralyzed by strokes were healed. About 12 people, each of whom had metal implanted in their body, were suddenly able to move freely and had pain disappear. This

church places high value on the presence of God, the gifts of God and the heart of God for evangelism. Silva requires the 3,000-plus cell leaders to go through training, including our *Ministry Team Training Manual*.

Mass Stirring

The city of Belém sits near the mouth of the Amazon River. In this city, Igreja Do Evangelho Quadrangulares (Foursquare Gospel Church) has 30,000 members in its network of churches. The founding pastor's son, Paulo Bengtson, shared with us the two main reasons for their churches' phenomenal growth: our Global Awakening teams' visits and their cell group system.

When our teams held crusades in Belém, 25,000 people showed up in a packed arena with standing room only. The people had to walk through 3,000 intercessors to get into the facility; during the service these intercessors surrounded those standing, praying for the power of the Spirit to heal, deliver and save them. We met with hundreds of pastors throughout the city and prayed for them to receive fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit and fresh activation in the gifts of healing and words of knowledge.

In the interior north of Brazil lies the city of Imperatriz. The Associação das Assembléias de Deus de Imperatriz (Association of Assemblies of God in Imperatriz) has 50,000 members, about 20 percent of the city's 247,533 people. Healing has accounted for much of the church's growth. The denominational president for the state realizes the importance of equipping the people to move in the gifts of the Spirit. He also understands the effectiveness of open-air crusades, where a few healings can stir masses of people to respond to the preaching of the gospel.

A few years ago, a young woman in her early 20s came to what turned out to be the largest event of a three-week trip we made. She was so weak with cancer that she could only lay in a

pew. But when we prayed for her, she felt the fire of God come into her body. We continued to soak her in prayer for several minutes, after which she was able to stand and sing.

This young woman, who is a professional singer, had thoracic cancer. Prior to being prayed for, she didn't have enough breath to sing. Yet she'd had a dream about singing and people getting healed. I was supposed to speak the night we met, but instead I felt led by God to have her sing and tell people about her dream. She ended up singing for almost an hour, only stopping occasionally to pray for the sick and call people to Christ.

This woman wasn't a preacher or a leader in the church, but she had been healed of cancer and experienced a supernatural strengthening. Hundreds were healed and saved through her witness, her singing and her invitations. I sat on the sidelines and watched this young laywoman be used by His Spirit. Her dream truly had been from God.

Powerful Healing

One of our first trips to Brazil was deep into the Amazon rainforest to the city of Manaus. There, Pastor Renê Terra Nova had grown his church from 700 to 25,000 in seven years, after he and his church had been kicked out of the traditional Baptist denomination. Today the church has 70,000 members. Our teams have been to this church multiple times and experienced some of the most powerful meetings we've ever seen in Brazil. In fact, it's where we first saw people with AIDS healed, and where we had our first breakthrough with the deaf healed. One night there were eight cases of deafness healed in about 15 minutes.

At the time, the building didn't have walls; only the floor, ceiling and pillars supporting the ceiling were completed. We had just asked for the river of healing to flow into the building when it began to pour down rain. The wind came and

blew the rain into the deaf section.

At one event, we saw a 25-year-old paraplegic rise from his wheelchair when a member of our team—someone who had never prayed for the sick—was used for our greatest miracle. The young man, a police officer, had been shot in the stomach two months earlier; the bullet had severed his spine, yet God completely healed him that day.

On another visit to this Manaus church (after the walls had been erected), the wind began to blow so hard that the chairs in the back were blown over. Some men ran outside, only to find that there was no wind blowing that day—there had only been wind inside. So many miraculous things happened in this church that our teams were nicknamed the “miracle-workers.”

The churches mentioned here are only a small number of those experiencing great revival. All of these churches have a strong cell group emphasis and dynamic worship. They practice praying for the sick, and a high percentage of their membership is under 40 years old. All are experiencing the fruits of dynamic revival, including thousands coming to the Lord.

If we want to see the same type of revival Brazil has experienced for the last 12 years—and continues to experience—spread across every continent, we need to open the doors to the gifts of the Spirit and let God lead the way. He desires to blow on every nation!