

Though it's hard to know for certain right now, I think Noelle is going to be a red head. I say this not because of the color of the little hair she has right now or the way the sunlight reflects off of it, but largely because of the spunk that she possesses. My goodness, if what she has shown us so far is any indication of what she'll be like in the future, I think that she'll be a red-head for sure (no offence Cooke). Spunky, strong-willed, smiley, stubborn, adventurous, sweet, playful, mischievous and fearless to a fault; I think she must take after Marla's side of the family. She is both an absolute joy and a handful. Her favorite activities include wrestling with her sister, stealing Samara's toys and running off giggling, and sitting on her special pink chair while pointing at the TV and grunting (an obvious signal for us to turn it on). She climbs furniture and falls, but doesn't cry, loves to watch the neighbor's dogs, and jumps into the arms of complete strangers without a second thought. I can't even imagine what twins must have been like.

The girls keep growing, and their phases keep changing. A few weeks ago Samara started in a pre-school down the street for about 4 hours a week. We did this to help her have more interaction with kids her own age and to learn Portuguese. They have a bunny, turtles and a chicken. They do arts and crafts, sing silly songs and play outside. Needless to say, she absolutely loves it. Different phases aren't something that just our girls are experiencing. Marla and I are finding ourselves in a phase of ministry vastly different than what we've experienced in the past, and we are still getting used to it. We find ourselves in a church of about 4,000 members. There are 6 weekly services, and the place resembles a beehive of activity most of the time. Though the church is massive, we still haven't found our sense of community. Up to this point, my involvement has been largely administrative. I sit at a desk in my office for much of the day and pray, think and dream about things like evangelism strategies, national church / mission relationships and learning how to facilitate the business end of mission work. Yesterday I participated in my first seminary board meeting. We met to amend the by-laws of the seminary to facilitate an action that we want to do. A lawyer was there just to double check that what we were writing would be acceptable by the legal bodies that rule this country. All the while I was thinking, hmmm...I don't hardly even understand that type of legal language in English, let alone Portuguese! But God is good, and I can begin to see the progress that is being made. It's just a different type of progress that I've been used to seeing. In our last experience in Londrina, we measured progress by: changed lives, number of people involved and the quality of people being disciplined to grow into the likeness of Christ. Now, in this experience, we are learning to measure progress by: programs and events through which people's lives are changed, philosophies and strategies of how to get people involved, and the tools necessary to help people grow into the likeness of Christ.

It's kind of like a farmer, a sack of corn seed and some empty land. Sure he could use his two hands to dig each hole, plant each seed and watch after each plant until it grows into maturity. But he'd more effective if he had a hoe and a sprinkler. He'd be even more effective if he had a tractor and an irrigation system. So I guess a good picture of what we are doing right now is that we are working on developing the tools the farmer uses from a hoe to a tractor. It's not the kind of work where we are dirty and physically exhausted by the end of each day. It's the kind of work where at the end of the day we

are emotionally and mentally tired. The goal is the same, but the phase is different. It is surely a different place for us to be and it is taking some time to get used to it. Needless to say, our photos that we attach with the e-mails of the actual ministry we are involved in might look different than they did the last time we were in Brazil. And in fact we are taking less photos of ministry, because lets face it 1 photo of a group of people sitting and talking in a meeting looks pretty much the same as 100 pictures of people sitting and talking in a meeting.

Last week, in an effort to get to know more the churches outside of the immediate, I traveled with two pastors as they put on training events in different local churches. In 6 days we visited 6 different churches and drove about 1,000 miles. Our journey resembled one big tri-angle, but then when you look at that same tri-angle on a national map... I guess it wasn't such a big tri-angle after all. Most of our time was spent in small towns of under 20,000 people. To be honest some of it reminded me very much of where I grew up in Kansas. Farmland or cattle as far as I could see, warm and friendly people and really good food. It was also great to get to know better the two pastors with whom I traveled; Sandro and Edson. We talked, joked and brainstormed together in our extended cab Chevy S10 as we drove all those country miles. It was also great to get to know better the reality of some of the different areas of Brazil. And now, armed now with this 1rst hand information, I will return to the office to continue working on a culturally appropriate plan for future ministry.

As far as prayer requests go, I was that you guys pray for Marla. Her stomach hasn't been 100% for over a month now. She's battled colds and now nausea, and is just tired of being sick. Pray also that we'd start finding some community here as a family. And pray for the girls' health as we head into the colder season.

You guys are appreciated!

For the only Cause that matters,

Micah and Marla

Ps. Yeah, I went a little picture crazy but that is because I finally went some where new.