

scattered

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:4

Formation or Information?

by Dan Owsley, Brazil

Why would anybody want to go to seminary twice? One of our pastor friends is doing just that.

Wildemberg Nascimento is a Free Methodist pastor in the city of Luziania, one hour away from Brasilia, the nation's capital. When my wife, Hope, and I arrived in Brasília in the summer of 2012 to engage in leadership development, Wildemberg had already completed a seminary course and was scheduled to be ordained in the fall. Although I encouraged him to take additional monthly module classes in the newly developed Ministerial Formation Theological Course, I knew Wildemberg had no obligation to do so. To my surprise and pleasure, Wildemberg and his wife, Claudia, enrolled in the first seminary module class in 2012 and have remained faithful students since then, through 12 monthly modules.

Enrolling was a hard decision for Wildemberg to make. Academics had never been his strength, and he had entered the ministry at age 36 after several years of secular work. The reading and writing assignments were tougher than ever. Furthermore, he had other vital commitments, such as pastoring a church, working as a school bus driver and caring for his family.

So, why go to seminary again? He admits the phrase "ministerial formation" in the title of the course grabbed his attention and persuaded him to enroll with his wife. The classes in the other seminary had dispensed information about the Bible and theology, which was valuable, but they had not provided the element of spiritual formation, which Wildemberg knew he needed for pastoral ministry. Claudia, too, was eager to become more grounded in the Word in order to minister effectively.

After two years of study, Wildemberg shared about his seminary experience at a rally where several churches had gathered. He encouraged other church leaders to make the extra effort to enroll in the seminary modules. The classes taught him the value of being formed and molded in God's Word. He said learning to apply the Bible more intentionally to his life and ministry had made a big difference in the way he taught, preached and counseled. He affirmed that now the Bible wasn't just a tool to be used in ministry; it had become a living book that was shaping his thinking, attitudes and practice in Christian ministry.

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