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Don't Feed the Hungry?

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen.” Matthew 28:19-20 (Matthew). In those words, Jesus commands us to be missionaries to the entire world. In fact, those were the words that my father, a Methodist pastor, heard when he went on a Baptist mission trip to Brazil. Even though Brazil is the fifth largest country in size, the fact remains that they need help feeding their poor. For example, 45% of the children live below the poverty level. Thirty- three million people in Brazil are malnourished and one million two hundred thousand people in Brazil do not have access to clean water. (Water.org). I still remember the story my father told me of what he saw when he was there nearly twenty years ago. The mission trip required a lot of traveling from town to town where his group would deliver God's Word and physically build churches. On one of the travels to a small village in the state of Piaui, the group arrived when the residents were having dinner. As they were eating rice and beans supplied by the resident missionary for the one hundredth time, my dad piped up wondering if they could have something different to eat, something that would remind them of home. About that time, a little boy in muddy, torn rags appeared near where the missionaries were having dinner. Dad felt sorry for the child and thinking it was his duty to feed the hungry, started to get up planning on giving his food to the poor boy. Suddenly, one of the resident missionaries explained that he was not allowed to feed them. In other words, it was against the rules to feed the starving children. The resident missionary continued to elaborate and explain that today it would be one hungry child, tomorrow ten hungry children, and the third day one hundred hungry children. “So,” he said with a tone of annoyance, “don't feed the hungry.” (Dr. R.A. Kitchens May, 2022).

After hearing that story, pondering on it for years, and talking to several missionaries, I want to do something to make a difference in that area of Brazil. In essence, I want to find some way of feeding the hungry. After much research, I chose the community of Morrow Cabeça No Tempo which is in the state of Piaui. Morrow Cabeça No Tempo has very little public- accessible information because the area is so remote. Twenty-two percent of the 4,530 people who live in the town can't read. Their ages range from 0- to early 60's so 57% are 15-59 years old, 32% are 0-14 years old, and only 2% are above 60 years of age! Thusly, 40% are children. There is no industry and there are very few jobs. However, there are two missions; one is Roman Catholic and the other is Southern Baptist. They also have a small school. Besides food being scarce, clean water is non-existent. There are tiled cisterns that have been dug into the ground, only to be filled

with stream water that is not clean. Fifty-five-gallon barrels are used to get water from a local stream to fill the cisterns. Needless to say, the resident's health would improve with a clean water well in the community (J. Obannan, personal communication, January 10, 2023).

The problems in Brazil are systemic. They could be educated to do better. They need to be taught that if they work together to end racism both groups of people would be able to help one another. First, Brazil in general has a poverty problem. For example, slavery may have ended in 1888, but the poor are still forced to take jobs that put them in a position where they are forced to live in squalid conditions which in some cases mean living in abandoned hotels or on the streets. "Afro-Brasileiros, who are black and brown Brazilians, add up to just over 50 percent of the nation's population and are discriminated against and more excluded than the light skinned Brazilians. Afro-Brasileiros also make up the major portion of the poor people as well as the people who live on the streets, while less than 10 percent of the city's wealthy self-identify as Afro-Brasileiros" (<http://borgeonproject.org>). Next, the Brazilian government is part of an agreement with China where they are involved in deforestation of the Amazon to grow more crops for China and not for the people of Brazil. This may help the economy for the upper-class Brazilians yet in actuality it hurts more than it helps especially when one takes into account how many starving, malnourished, and underweight children are present nationwide. For example, over the last three years children being hospitalized due to malnutrition has continued to increase. In 2020, the number of children who were hospitalized due to malnutrition was two thousand four hundred nine and in 2021, there were two thousand five hundred five children hospitalized due to malnourishment. In 2022, there was a staggering two thousand eight hundred fifty-seven children who were hospitalized due to malnutrition. Even though these numbers keep rising, nothing was done to turn the tide by the natives. ([Child malnutrition in Brazil: Public health issue that needs awareness - ScienceDirect](#)). Lastly, Brazil may have a vast amount of water but they are not using it for humanitarian endeavors. Instead, 60 percent of the nation's power comes from hydro plants and 72 percent of the water there is used to irrigate the agriculture to feed China, not Brazil. (<http://borgeonproject.org>).

This town has two issues that should be addressed that are integral to its preservation of life. With our help, we could make their dream become a reality. The first is clean water and the second is a community farm. How we go about helping them is as crucial as the actual act of helping them. The first rule of helping people in a poor country especially in the region of Pioui is that the missionaries must work within the realm of their understanding so to include their ideas and their culture into the way forward for their community. (B. Johnston, personal communication, January 3, 2023) For example, there is an indigenous, remote tribe in Brazil named the Makuna. They are resourceful yet impoverished, and very few people visit them throughout the year. Because of this, negative experiences have made the people of the tribe become skeptical of all visitors. Even though some visitors have good intentions, others do not. Thusly, the Makuna have felt as if they have been exploited by "whites" as they call them. Their trust has been compromised and before they would accept help, it would have to be reestablished. The

trust was lost about three generations back when they were cheated by some traders who came into their area, and they have never forgiven the outsiders. This may not be the experience the people had in the community I chose to focus on helping, but the story serves as a reminder to the helpers even with the greatest intentions. Trust must be established before help will be accepted (Samper, 35). In Morrow Cabeca No Tempo, the Southern Baptists have already established a relationship, so I would work with their trusted resident missionary who is already in the area. Then working within their paradigm, one who goes to that community would quickly notice that they have about a dozen wild donkeys that free range. This can prove to be an excellent resource. Donkeys are natural enemies to predators that attack small animals; they live a longer life than horses, and are more careful about their surroundings. Therefore, we in Mississippi could bring a group of people trained in breaking the donkeys. We would also send baby chicks and three dozen young goats in hopes that the communities' donkey population would protect them naturally. The team would donate four plows and the farming implements used to harness the donkeys in the community farming operation. The chickens would be put up at night in mobile chicken coops so that they are able to naturally fertilize the area that would be used for cultivating the corn fields. At present, corn is stored through the year in a dried state. Outdoor shelves are used to dry the corn inside the shuck to preserve it.

Since I would be leading this mission endeavor, I would want to use a group that our church has a long-standing relationship with and for years has gained our trust. Thusly, they have been properly vetted. Samaritan's Purse was started by Billy Graham in 1970 and is most well known for their shoebox ministry during the holidays each year. Since 1993, they have delivered more than 157 million shoeboxes to children in more than 160 countries around the world. Even though they are known for the shoebox ministry, they also are responsible for many other types of mission endeavors around the world. For example, Samaritan's Purse has dug 13,924 wells to date. They are able to dig them for \$10,000 each. The chicks are \$14 per household. Samaritan's Purse has supplied 13,656 households with chickens, and they have given 13,754 goats to families around the world which are only \$70 each. (Samaritans Purse 2023). The plows and bridles would be donated and brought by the mission team from Mississippi. Our small Methodist Church has a pulled pork smoking fundraiser each year and we are able to raise about two thousand dollars. Additionally, our youth group has an annual garage sale and on average raise about one thousand dollars. At Christmas time, we also raise about two thousand dollars to help a needy family. We could put all of that together and over three years have enough money to get these plans in motion. Thusly, this would be an ecumenical project between the Methodists and the Baptists and by the summer of 2026, Morrow Cabeca No Tempo would have clean water. They would have a community chicken farm for eggs and meat, a community garden that fed the chickens, donkeys, and the people of the town and they would also have a heard of goats for milk, cheese, meat, and skins.

In conclusion, Morrow Cabeca No Tempo has two problems in need of addressing simultaneously which are clean water and food. Some people would just send the food,

but that would only just get them by for a short time. My idea would set them up to be able to be sustainable from now on. They need a clean well and a community farm. This should get them on their way to a happier, healthier community. In order to accomplish this, I would need to make the need known in my churches. Secondly, I would need to start a committee with people who are interested in owning this dream and willing to help make it a reality. My church can have the fundraisers, then work alongside Samaritan's Purse to get the well, chicks, and goats to Morrow Cabeca No Tempo. We would then work with the Baptist missionary on site and schedule a mission group to help break the donkeys and bring the farming implements to establish the community garden. This won't solve all of Morrow Cabeca No Tempo's problems, but it will make a huge impact. There are a lot of problems in the world, and thankfully, we with the World Food Prize are heightening awareness and are committed to doing our part in trying to solve one problem at a time and most definitely making an effort to do anything but "don't feed the hungry."

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[Child malnutrition in Brazil: Public health issue that needs awareness - ScienceDirect](#)