



ALLIGATOR SPOTTING



Few things are more intimidating than standing at the edge of a shallow swamp in the half-light of dusk just thirty feet in front of a fifteen foot alligator that is eyeballing you, with nothing but a pair of soggy flip flops with which to make your escape. We were visiting a small river community in the Amazon to help run the first ever Holiday Bible Club for Kids in the area, and staying at a friend's house six hours up river from our own home, but now nervously poised at the bottom of the garden, the unsafe side of the fence, allowing time for our dinner to go down, hoping that we would not soon be going down as someone else's dinner. It's not like I had eaten much, having been put off after enduring the displeasure of watching our meal being skinned, gutted and partially deboned whilst it was looking back at me – memories which were kept fresh in my mind having just stumbled into the waste disposal gutter full of the remains of every other household waste you are brave enough to imagine.

It has to be said that there is one thing which is "more intimidating" than the above scenario, and that is to be stood in front of a large group of caffeine-infused, dark-skinned smiling faces, puzzling over your best efforts to communicate in their language the profound truths of God's word through the life and times of King David. Although we have lived and worked in Brazil for the past eighteen months we still suffer from linguistic-retardation, but are driven on by our God-given desire to shine the light of gospel truth in these spiritually darkened and forgotten communities – of which there are countless thousands – so there we were for a week in July compelled to face our biggest challenge to date.

In reflection of this experience we praise God for the hundred or so children who came under the sound of the gospel; for His

provision of our five-strong maverick-mission team – although between us none had experienced such a venture before – we marvel at how through our weakness His strength and faithfulness were clearly revealed; and we also praise God, and continue to pray, for the encouragement of the tiny fellowship made up of little more than the pastor and his family that we left behind, that some of these children along with their families will begin to regularly attend that place of worship with an insatiable longing to want to know more of Christ.

It was six years ago that God first "called" us to serve Him here in north Brazil, where we presently live in a river community of 50,000 people called "Ma-na-ca-pa-ru", three hours by car and boat west of Manaus where the Love family serve. Our normal day to day work comprises of supporting a local church, helping to train and equip them to do their work more effectively. We are also involved in preparing and presenting radio programmes each week, which are received by many isolated river-people within a 70 mile radius. These are needy souls living in stilted-huts perched on the edge of the river, those whom no one else is presently reaching with the gospel of God's free grace, people we plan on visiting more regularly when we get our own boat. Here we have an open door of opportunity so wide it amazes us with each river trip, as EVERY home we could call on welcomes us in, and there we are presented with numerous opportunities, more than time permits, to read and explain the Scriptures, share our testimonies, for me to play hymns on my harmonica and for us to pray together before moving onto the next home...

Yes there is opposition: the devout Catholics don't like us; the Mormons and JW's (so-called) are bemused by our presence and peddle their lies all the more furiously; the humid





temperature is frequently in the high thirties and saps our strength; the stinging, itchy-scratchy little beasts, along with the dodgy food, remind us to test our "call" regularly; the bureaucracy and hollow promises, daily power-cuts and 70's technology, all hamper progress... yet despite these challenges, we rejoice that Christ is building His Kingdom and the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it, whatever shape and form they materialise into.

It is by God's grace alone that we are here in the Amazon, and unless God reveals otherwise, here we are content to work until promoted to heaven, or perhaps as the pastor we work alongside has assured

us, that we must stay until Christ returns! But until one or the other of these events occurs, please join us in the spirit of prayer and call out to the Lord of Glory, asking Him to manifest Himself through the preaching of His word and our testimonies, to reveal His saving love to the salvation of many of these lost and forgotten river-folk. ■

Jason & Andrea Murfitt

