

A REPORT FROM LEE AND MARCIE TOSTI
GREATER PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
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"I'm not afraid to read the OT anymore." That one is my favorite. (Imagine being afraid to read God's word! satan has his ways.) "You almost want to say, "Show me in the Bible."" She's getting there. Marcie and I study with Suzana on Wednesdays. We're going through Matthew; last week we began the "Sermon on the Mountain." Suzana, when she's not reading ahead in Matthew, is reading Daniel (twice), Philippians, and other passages. Having learned that it takes time and effort to know the Bible, she has become less intimidated in her ignorance. And becoming confident in what she does know, she is more aware of what others are peddling, and how they peddle it.

Ring, ring, ring. "Hello..."

Years ago, I heard someone recount that Bob Bunting, one time, when his phone rang, mumbled outloud, "Maybe this is someone who wants to study the Bible." I try to keep this in mind when my phone rings.

Ring, ring, ring. "Hello?" I said. "Hello," he barely said in reply, "Does the Bible teach karma? I was reading in the Old Testament: Jacob lied to his father, and later Jacob's father-in-law lied to him; Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver, and later Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver. Is this karma?" You never know what they will say. In times like this, I am even more thankful that "success" depends more on people's hearts and God's patience than my intelligence and ability to communicate! And my role is not to prove a point or "win" an argument, etc., (though it involves these things); rather, my role is simply to be humble, speak as much of the truth as I can in love, pray, and see what happens. (And go for help if needed!)

Since then, I've talked with Joseph twice, for an hour and a half. Joseph grew up "both Christian and Messianic Jew" before rejecting the Jesus, the Bible, and the God of the Bible and becoming "spiritual"; he lives in Florida; he calls "evangelicals" to "understand the Bible better"; he saw my name on bible.ca. You can tell from my description that this seems not to be the ideal situation. But, while it is prudent, the more tempted I am to simply dismiss this opportunity, the more I counter that notion with the realization that, both I can grow, and maybe the tidbits of the Word and reason he hears will begin to soften his heart. So I enjoy the mental exercise of listening patiently, identifying the fundamental(s), not chasing every rabbit, and selectively helping in the underpinning issues. And there are times when it very much seems he is genuinely thinking....

"Class with you is always fun!" This one is my *favorite* favorite! A member here sent this short message to me. I include it in this report for two reasons. First, I do not include it to show that "my" classes are always fun, or even sometimes fun: the statement reflects more about the person who sent it than it does "my" classes. That said, there are times when a teacher wonders if his work is profitable—it happens, like, *every class and sermon* (🤔). In such cases, "how delightful is a timely word"! And I was and am delighted. I include it to encourage you to encourage the workers you know, however they are serving!

Speaking of the simple but valuable work of encouraging others, I recently told a man here that I appreciate his public prayers. He replied, "This is valuable for me to know. Public prayer is a sensitive subject for me, since I'm very comfortable with my personal relationship with God, but really have no

sense of how that directly translates to how others relate." Again, how a simple encouragement (about prayer, in this case) can hit the spot! You never know.

The congregation grows together in knowledge, faith, and unity. Important group discussions are happening and healthy. Classes are not only fun, they are edifying also. Assemblies are uplifting. We regularly have visitors, and we have regular visitors. Members are having Bible studies with non-believers. It is a privilege to work in the Lord's Kingdom here.

Thank you for your interest and support in the work Marcie and I do. If you would like to know more, please ask!

Lee and Marcie Tosti
4A Boswell Trail
Foster, RI 02825
Lee: (607) 280-0800; xntoc@usa.net
Marcie: (315) 608-1118; marcie-tosti@usa.net

Post Script: I have transitioned to writing quarterly reports: Every March, June, September, and December 15th.