



# IRTC

INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

## Planting Seeds of Faith in the Far Corners of Brazil

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. – Acts 1:8 ESV*

Lucas Salviano, a student at the IRTC, has a story that extends beyond his hometown of Blumenau, where he serves as an assistant pastor. He also extends his ministry to the quilombola community of Barra de Oitis, in Diamante-Paraíba, led by Pastor Nézinho. (A quilombola is a Brazilian hinterland settlement founded by people of African origin, many of whom were escaped slaves.) This church lacks certain basic elements of infrastructure, such as bathrooms, but it has about 50 members who gather weekly for worship. The simplicity of life is evident—from the pigs roaming freely in the yard to the old buildings and unpaved roads. According to Lucas, the online nature of the IRTC was essential in allowing him to continue developing missionary work. Next, Lucas shares what drew him to the IRTC and considers his experience with the College.

In Brazil, there is a lack of theological institutions with an orthodox and learned faculty. In this context, the IRTC presented itself to me as the best of all options. Since I am located far from a major city, this institution allowed me to be trained by reformed pastors who are highly respected in their respective fields of study; great theologians who have applied all their knowledge to the life of the church.

Although it requires greater discipline, the distance learning offered by the IRTC has the advantage of not being limited to just one time and place. As a missionary pastor, I often needed to visit other fields and church plants in remote regions in Brazil. Through virtual study at the IRTC, I was able to continue studying with my teachers even during my travels.

One of my dearest instructors, and without exaggeration, one of the greatest, was Dr. Frans Leonard Schalkwijk. In my first year, while studying Early Church History, he called me to heed the exhortation of 1 Corinthians 4:2, to be found as a faithful steward of the Word. He emphasized that redeeming how we spend our time is part of this required faithfulness. I then understood that my readings,



*Lucas, shown above with his Associate's degree, recently completed the requirements for a Bachelor's in Biblical Studies*

assignments, exams, and my entire academic journey, as well as everything in my life, was being done *coram Deo* (in the presence of God). Consequently, I developed the habit of studying every day, beginning in the early morning, and reading at least 20 pages required by my program. This discipline is not natural to me, but God has blessed this consistency, greatly enriching my learning.

Another transformative experience in my ministry occurred during a live class on the Pentateuch with Dr. Daniel Charles Gomes. We were studying the book of Leviticus, and he made a remark along the lines of, 'It's not enough to chew the cud, the animal must also have split hooves. It's not enough to have split hooves; it must also chew the cud.' In the context of the lesson, he meant that we cannot fragment Truth and select only one aspect of it to hold dear. This impacted my life and from then on, it gave me the strength to resist this tendency. I have kept these words in my heart, and they often resonate, reminding me of the need to fully cherish the revealed Truth.

I grew significantly through my interaction with these and other instructors, as I learned that my mentors had endured the same pains as I have in ministry. I understood that undergoing certain afflictions is part of the process, and that suffering is not always an indicator of my own mistakes. From their example, I learned to endure and overcome such difficulties, recognizing that Christ is not only the Lord of my salvation but also Lord over the mission. Looking to Him, believing that all power has been given to Him in heaven and on earth, and that He will be with His people and stewards until the end of the ages, brought me peace and relief from the external and internal pressures I often faced.

The guidance of my mentor, brother, and friend, Pastor Saulo de Melo, was essential in my journey. He was God's instrument in providing me with security and calming my heart. Ernest Hemingway reminds us that in the trenches, it's more important who is by your side, and I agree: having a fellow prayer warrior and devotee with me was crucial.

I plan to use the knowledge I've gained to teach and care for missionaries, areas in which I'm already active and where God has blessed me. The wonder is that, as God is eternal, theology can never be exhaustive. I love studying this field and hope to be found by my Lord, still mining precious truths about His Person and works in my old age.

To new students, I offer this suggestion: let the dust settle. Our feelings and wills, since the Fall, are unstable. There will be days when the only thing God uses to inspire us to fulfill our commitment will be a sense of responsibility. There will be obstacles, sleepless nights, and problems to solve. On such days, quitting may seem like a perfect solution. Wait a few more days before giving up, and you'll see that the nights will again be restful, solutions will be found, and the Lord will be glorified through your perseverance. Until Christ is formed in us, all things are working together to form that image. Keep striving and let the Holy Spirit apply all these adversities in a way that glorifies God and edifies us.

To the dear brothers and sisters who financially support the IRTC, I want to say that over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting other students from various backgrounds, some studying in conditions of extreme scarcity. Without the IRTC and the support it has received, these brothers and sisters would never have been able to study theology with the depth and excellence that exists at the IRTC. I pray that God continues to be pleased in using these men and women, who have generously invested in the training and equipping of new workers for the harvest, even in the most remote fields of the planet.



*Above: church plant (in blue) in Barra de Oitis, Diamante, Paraíba.*

*Below: caring for missionaries in the field through a Zoom video conference.*



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