



FROM BRAZIL TO BEANTOWN

A CHURCH PLANTER IN BOSTON CONNECTS PEOPLE WITH THE GOSPEL



Victor Moura, a church planter in the North Shore area of Boston, Massachusetts, says the people's two greatest needs are to be connected to God and to one another in strong and healthy relationships. More than a third of city residents don't ascribe to a faith of any kind. Despite great darkness and spiritual lostness, the gospel continues to bear fruit.

This message is what caused the Moura family to move to Boston in 2017 from Brazil, confident they possessed the only remedy for the spiritual and relational isolation they had seen in New England.

GETTING TO BOSTON

Victor and Ludmila Moura are originally from the capital city of Brasilia, Brazil. Founded in 1960, Brasilia is known for its modern architecture. In addition to its iconic buildings, the city boasts some of the most beautiful sunsets in the world.

Victor and Ludmila met at church in Brasilia in 2013. After only six months, they were married on a day Victor calls "the happiest day of [his] life." At the time, Ludmila was working for the government as a lawyer, and Victor was serving as both youth pastor and executive pastor in one of the most influential churches in the area. Life was good for the Mouras, and they were happy in Brazil. That changed in 2014, when Victor and Ludmila felt God calling them to the United States.

"Even though we had a comfortable life [in Brasilia] with friends around and family supporting us, we felt some emptiness—without any apparent reason," Victor said. "We felt our time there had ended. So we started praying, asking God's direction and confirmation."

Victor was already familiar with the US. His parents divorced when he was young, and his father moved there. His father later remarried, and after several years became a US citizen. Victor's father applied for him to have a green

card and was approved, giving Victor permanent resident status in the US. To maintain this status, Victor traveled to the US often, sometimes visiting his father, sometimes visiting friends.

The Lord confirmed His calling to the US through his and Ludmila's friends and family and the Mouras began the yearslong visa application process for Ludmila. During this period of waiting, Victor traveled to Massachusetts three times to visit a friend who was a church planter there. This friend introduced Victor to local pastors as well as the leaders for the Baptist Convention of New England and the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

"I saw the need for church planting," Victor recalled. "I saw churches closing their doors and people unaware of the gospel. In fact, I discovered that 7 of the 10 most post-Christian cities in the US are [in] New England.¹ God opened my eyes and planted in my heart the desire to make a difference here."

Finally, three years after God first called the Mouras to the US, the news came. God had provided once again, and Ludmila was granted a visa. As Victor said, "After three years of waiting and investing a lot, we finally got her visa. She was dreaming with me." They received Ludmila's finalized visa in August 2017, when she was eight months pregnant with their first child. Ludmila's doctor approved them for immediate travel, and they moved their young family to the US five days later.

During the intense, seemingly never-ending days between receiving Ludmila's visa and landing in the US, the Mouras continually saw God meeting their needs and confirming His leading. First, Victor and Ludmila emptied their apartment, donating everything—appliances, furniture, clothing, etc. The doctor said Ludmila would need to fly first-class (a total of \$6,000), and a friend gave them the money to pay for the tickets. Finally, Victor swiftly sold his car for cash.

"We were running against the clock," Victor said. "We took the flight with just a little luggage and a lot of hope in our hearts!" Twenty days after setting foot on North American soil, Victor and Ludmila's daughter Elizabeth "Liz" was born.

Every step of the way, God provided for their family. Their first year and a half in the US, the Mouras lived in Boston in a home owned by NAMB and provided with funds from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO). Not having to worry about paying rent while getting settled in a new country and adjusting to their new ministry was a huge blessing to Victor and Ludmila.

Victor recalled, "Our beginning here wasn't easy—a new culture, a new language, a new way to do ministry, a really aggressive winter, and no friends and family to support us. But we made it by God's grace. [The move] shaped our faith, helping us to trust more in

God's provision, see His powerful hand, and grow in perseverance."

A NEW WAY TO DO MINISTRY

As they began to adapt to life in the US, the Mouras noticed several differences between their hometown of Brasilia and their new home in Boston. Brazil has a tropical climate, and the temperature in Brasilia remains warm all year long. In contrast, the Mouras have been amazed by the four full seasons they experience in Boston. The long, intense winters are challenging for the Mouras and can cause them to feel moody and tempted to withdraw from social interactions. Even so, they love the diversity in Boston and are grateful they can meet people from a wide range of backgrounds in their city.

"Just in my street," Victor said, "lives a couple from Peru, another woman from Poland, and other neighbors from Costa Rica. We are learning a lot about new cultures, new food, and other languages." Getting to know new people and building relationships with them is one of the most rewarding aspects of the Mouras' ministry.

"The people here are much more sociable and friendly than I expected," Victor said. "We are learning as much as we can about the context in which we are planted. The best way for this to happen is by knowing people. This isn't easy. You need to leave your comfort zone, and you need to be intentional to create opportunities to meet new people."

MAINTAINING HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

Victor draws encouragement from Scripture. He uses 1 Peter 5:6–7 as a daily reminder to "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

"I love these verses because they remind me God is always in control," Victor explained. "My goal is to humble myself under God's hand, and He will honor me because of that. These verses say God is always ready to listen to me. They bring me comfort because they affirm that He is taking care of me—even when I'm going through hardships."

The story of God calling Abraham and being faithful to His promises (Genesis 12) and the account of Daniel's perseverance during exile (the Book of Daniel) are also among Victor's favorite Bible passages. Victor knows the God who called and sustained Abraham and Daniel is the same God who called him to move his family into a life of ministry in New England. He trusts God will sustain them, and he knows He will continue to provide everything they need as they try to reach others with the message of the gospel.

THE GOSPEL IS BEARING FRUIT

The Mouras minister to their community by organizing social events where members of the community can meet and build relationships with one another. During one recent event, they brought an ice-cream truck into their front yard and gave away ice cream. They also host small groups, where nonbelievers can learn about the Lord and His Word for the first time in a welcoming environment. Victor and Ludmila are also teaching their now four-year-old daughter the importance of loving their neighbors.

As Victor said, “For me, friendship is the most effective way to share your faith and testimony with others.” The Lord is using these friendships and groups to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

One neighbor, Israel, was baptized a little over a year ago. Before knowing Christ, Israel didn’t think he needed salvation, because he believed he was a good person. His wife, Monica, was already a believer, and she had been praying for his salvation for a decade. Victor described Israel before Christ as an unfriendly person who struggled to forgive people; someone who was bitter, with no purpose in life. But Christ transformed him. Now, Israel’s relationship with God allows him to connect with others, and he freely shares the story of his transformation with those around him.

“I can see the joy in his eyes when he speaks about the gospel,” Victor said. “Israel has his own electrical company. He’s being intentional to share the gospel with his employees and clients. He is now teaching the gospel

to Igor, one of his coworkers. Igor is learning about Jesus, salvation, purpose, and real love.”

For more information and to see a video about Victor and Ludmila’s ministry, visit anniearmstrong.com/resource/moura/.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray God would continue to give Victor and Ludmila spiritual, emotional, and physical health.
- Pray God would help Victor and Ludmila build strong friendships.
- Pray God would send more partners to join the ministry.
- Pray Victor and Ludmila would continue to improve their communication skills in English.
- Pray for the salvation and baptism of friends who are currently attending church.
- Pray for the Mouras as they meet needs, build relationships, and share the gospel with Brazilians in their community.

REPORTS OF ANSWERED PRAYERS

- Praise God that Ludmila is working full-time as an assistant teacher for toddlers.
- Praise God that Victor and Ludmila were able to buy a house.
- Praise God that Liz is adapting well to her new school.

*“The Most Post-Christian Cities in America: 2019.” Barna Group. Accessed July 15, 2021. <https://www.barna.com/research/post-christian-cities-2019/>.

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FOR GROUP OR CHURCHWIDE STUDY:

BEFORE THE SESSION: Read “From Brazil to Beantown,” and prepare to discuss Victor and Ludmila Moura’s journey with your group.

1. Decorate the meeting space with items that reflect Brazilian culture. If possible, enlist volunteers to prepare popular Brazilian foods. Include at least one dish with cranberries, the official state fruit of Massachusetts.
2. Present a summary of “From Brazil to Beantown” to your group, highlighting the ways God opened doors for the Mouras to begin their ministry in Massachusetts.
3. Discuss how God uses believers, focusing on the idea that we belong to Him, and the way He uses us for His holy purposes.
4. Enlist one group member to read Genesis 12 aloud. Ask another to share his or her testimony of God’s faithfulness in their ministry.
5. Ask a volunteer to read Victor and Ludmila’s prayer requests to the group. Pray together for the Moura family.
6. Point out that the Mouras were helped by the NAMB and the AAEO. Play the video, *NAMB, Who We Are*, found at: <https://www.anniemstrong.com/resource/north-american-mission-board-who-we-are/>.



FOR FAMILY STUDY:

1. Read “From Brazil to Beantown.” Have different members of your family take turns reading sections of the article.
2. Read 1 Peter 5:6–7 and ask: *What does it mean to humble yourself under God’s hand?*
3. Talk about some of the ways the Mouras have shown hospitality to their community in Boston by doing things like: organizing social events, giving away ice cream, hosting small groups, etc.
4. Discuss some ways your family can show hospitality to your neighbors. A few ideas may be: organizing a neighborhood BBQ, taking a meal to an elderly person, or serving at a soup kitchen or food bank.
5. Ask your family: *Who do we know who needs Jesus?* Take time to discuss why the gospel is so important, and how showing hospitality can open doors for the gospel to be shared.
6. Read the Mouras’ prayer requests, and ask members of your family to take turns praying over each need.



FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY:

1. Read “From Brazil to Beantown,” and underline each time the Mouras were challenged by struggles or roadblocks in their calling.
2. Take note of how long the couple waited before their move to the United States became a reality.
3. Ask yourself: *Is waiting passive or active? Is time spent waiting on God useful to my faith and ministry?* Think about the things in your life you are waiting on God for. Pray God would grow you spiritually in the process.
4. Read Genesis 12, and reflect on God’s faithfulness.
5. Note how God removed the Mouras from their comfortable lives in Brazil and transplanted them to Boston in order to connect with people.
6. Pray God would show you people in your life you should be connecting with. What gifts, talents, or life experiences do you possess that can build bridges for the gospel?
7. Pray for yourself and the Moura family to be beacons of hope.