

FSM 401 May 2003



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A PERFECT
PLACE

part 2



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A joy in my heart

By Francesco
(20), Taiwan

I'm from Hong Kong, and went to Australia five years ago. When I was growing up in Hong Kong, my family was involved in the entertainment business. Two of my cousins are singers, and my uncle was an actor. Through them, I met many famous Chinese actors, like Jackie Chan, Jet Lee, and Chow Yun-Fat.

The actors always threw big parties, and my cousins would often take me along. I was very young, but I knew that that kind of lifestyle didn't make them happy and wasn't fulfilling. I could see there was something missing in their lives, something they couldn't find no matter how rich or powerful or popular they were.

Cover:



“There I was, standing in the middle of the dark world under the light of a single lantern. That was the sign from Him! I just knew it! I was crying, and I knew that I was forgiven.”

—David, Russia (Read his testimony, “The Sign of the Lantern,” pg.22!)

Contents:

A joy in my heart _____ 2

Francesco (20), Taiwan

Not too far gone for Jesus _____ 8

Faithy Elan, Madagascar

Nothing better _____ 16

Gala (24, Russian), India

He can heal *anything!* _____ 20

Israel, Mexico

The sign of the lantern _____ 22

David (28, formerly Alkor), Russia

Cover art by Kristen

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When I was 11 years old, my parents separated. During that time I was very upset and unhappy about life. I used to go to Catholic school, so I knew a little bit about God and Jesus. I always asked God, “Why did You allow these things to happen? Why did You allow my father and mother to separate?” I was very emotional then and always argued with my parents and relatives. I was a very angry young man.

Then five years later, my mother decided to go to Australia, because she thought I’d get a better education and that there would be more opportunities in Australia. At first I didn’t really want to go, and I was having real trials at the time as a teenager.

My dream

I was looking for my identity, looking for a place to belong, looking for the meaning of life. After I went to Australia, I got involved in basketball. Instead of getting a good education and a good job, I wanted to be a professional basketball player.

I’ve always wanted to do something different, not to get into a routine in life where I would just

work and retire and die. I wanted to do something extraordinary—have a dream, something to achieve. So I made a commitment to myself. My dream was to become a professional basketball player—the first Asian to play in the NBA. If you had known me five years ago, you would have thought I was crazy—I mean really crazy! I was overweight, I was short, and I couldn’t even dribble a basketball! I committed myself to train every day. I started reading motivating articles from famous sportsmen, and through those I learned that if you want to be successful at something, you have to put all your energy, your mind, your body, your tears, your sweat into it. I knew that if I wanted to be a professional basketball player, I would have to put my whole life into it.

I trained five to six hours a day. I would wake up at six in the morning and train before school. Then after school, I would train again until dinner.

Meeting James

One day while I was playing at a basketball court, I met a brother named James, from the Family. We played a couple of games, and when we finished, he started to witness to me. That first day we met, he told me about the Lord, the Endtime, that Jesus is going to come back very soon, what’s going on in the world, and how to go to Heaven. It was very interesting! I couldn’t even really understand all he was talking about, but I got that he was a good man, a Christian.

I prayed with him, but didn’t expect any miracle to happen. We stayed friends and also competitive basketball “enemies.” We often talked about life, culture, and the things I wanted to do.

It was three years ago now that I saw my grandfather die of cancer, right in front of me. My grandfather was a very popular old man because of some of my relatives being in the entertainment business, so when he died he had a big funeral. But it made me wonder—if he was so rich and popular and got everything that he wanted in life, why was he dying in sorrow and pain?

I began to wonder about what happens when people die. What happens after that? There must be

something more, I felt, because I could see that everybody has a soul and a spirit. I started to question and think about life.

Two years ago, my hard work in basketball training paid off. I was training with a semi-professional basketball team, and I knew a coach who could help me go to college in the States to play basketball. I thought my dream was coming true. I was going places in my life. But even though I felt like I was accomplishing something and achieving my goal, something in my heart was missing. Something wasn't right.

Something special

On my 18th birthday my parents gave me \$2000 to spend. I didn't know how to spend it, because I had always been given everything that I ever wanted in life! I was very discouraged, feeling so unfulfilled and empty. There were a lot of pressures on me from school and from basketball. I was very frustrated. My mother and I would always argue. I was at the end of my rope, and I knew if I didn't get help, I would go crazy.

Then one day after a basketball game, James

took me home. He shared with me about the work he had been doing over the last 25 years in the Family. He told me about Renee (SGA, the daughter of Lynn, in his Home) who was in Africa at the time. It was like a light turned on for me. I thought, *Wow, that's something really special!* That really inspired me, because when I looked at all the newspapers and the world situation, I could see there was no goodness or kindness. It was all about evil.

So when James shared that with me, it impressed me, and I found the purpose for the money.—I decided to give some of it to Renee in Africa. She was like an angel to me, and I really admired what she was doing. (If Renee hadn't decided to be in the Family despite the ups and downs, I would not be here today. I love you, Ren! I met Renee later, as you'll see.)

After that, James gave me a tract to read called "To You—With Love." It says that when you're showing goodness and kindness and mercy and understanding, you're showing God, because God is the Spirit of love. That touched my heart, especially because during that time I was very angry.

The ice melted

Two weeks later, James invited me to his Home. I felt something so warm and so special there. It was Jesus' Spirit I could feel in the Home. I had dinner with them, and James gave me a Bible class. Just before I left, he asked me to pray with him to receive the Holy Spirit. At that time I had no idea what he was talking about, but because of his sincerity, I prayed with him.

As I walked home by myself, I could feel something very special in my heart, so strongly. It was something I couldn't see, I couldn't smell, I couldn't taste, I couldn't hear, but something deep down in my heart had changed me. I knew that Jesus had changed my life. He had given me love and peace I had never known. I felt like I was in love with love itself! I was in tears as I walked home.

At home I opened the door, saw my mother, and stood there for about five minutes. She looked at me and said, "What happened to you? You look strange!"

I said, "Mum, there's something I want to share with you."

She said, “What is it?”

I said, “Mum, I really love you! And I’m sorry for the things that I’ve done wrong.”

I burst into tears, and my mother started crying as well. It was as if some ice that had been inside for so long just melted. It was a miracle to me, because in my Asian culture we don’t apologize to people and we don’t express ourselves in love. For me to do that was a big miracle.

The next morning when I woke up, I was a completely new creature. I saw James again and I said, “James, James, James! I’m so happy! I know that Jesus is real! Wow! This feeling is so good! I have this joy in my heart that I just want to share with people!”

Pouring out

So James began to take me out to different places witnessing to people. He took his guitar along, we had some lit with us, and we just went along the streets and shared with people about Jesus. It was so much fun and so inspiring! Every time you go to witness to lonely people on the street, you can feel the

Spirit being poured out of you and you know that the Lord is using you to share His love with other people!

James also took me along when he visited some people in jail, and it was just so much fun. Those were the happiest moments in my life up to that time.

During the two-week Easter holidays, James and I went out witnessing every day. Sometimes we’d go to really bad areas. There’s a place called King’s Cross in Sydney where all the drugs and prostitution happen. We sang songs to prostitutes on the street, handed out lit, and it was wonderful. You could see the Lord’s light shining out to that place!

I was enjoying all that was happening, and being able to witness and share with people about Jesus. Then it came to a point where I had to make a decision in my life. God was telling me, “Francesco, you can still be a famous basketball player and see all your dreams come true, or you can come and serve Me.”

It was a big decision to make, because I had put a lot of hard work into basketball. But I also felt like that time—all the discipline and dedication I learned from basketball—had been training and preparing me to do bigger things in life. If I could put that training into God’s service, it would be much better.

One of my friends is a Mormon, and a very good basketball player as well. He’s Asian and not extremely tall, but he’s a very good player. He was training with the same team I was training with, but he decided to be a Mormon missionary and go to the Philippines to help other people. Then my coach was saying to me, “Oh, your friend is so stupid to go to the Philippines and do all this stupid missionary work. If you want to be a good basketball player, you’ve gotta play basketball!”

When he said that, it was like a punch in the gut. In my mind I felt like, No, no, no! He’s not stupid at all! Life is really more than a leather ball and a metal hoop!

So a week later, I said, “No, I know that this joy and happiness I have—basketball couldn’t offer it to me.” So I quit playing basketball with this semi-professional team. I gave up the possibility of a scholarship

in the States. Basically I quit everything!

I had so much hunger for the Word. I was like a little baby; I was sucking in all the Word that James and Lynn were sharing with me. James gave me the green MO book (the basic 144 Letters) to read. The words of Grandpa were so powerful, and changed me so much that I wanted to drop out and join full time right away.

After Easter holidays I had to go back to school—unfortunately—to finish my 12th grade year. I was a bit upset about this, because I didn't want to go back to school, but I wanted to drop out and become a full-time disciple. Thank the Lord for shepherds and their past experiences. They knew that my dropping out immediately was not going to be a very wise move. I asked the Lord, "Jesus, what do You want me to do?"

The Lord told me, "If I put you in that situation, just be there." So instead of getting all upset about it, I started witnessing at school to my friends and to all the kids there. So far I think 900 souls have been saved in my school. I could see the Spirit pour

down, and Jesus really worked in those people's lives. I also stayed in school for my parents' sake, and it bore beautiful fruit in my relationship with my parents.

I went back to school and shared with my friends all the fun things I'd been doing with the Family—visiting people in prison, going to feed the homeless, going out to different places to talk to people on the street. All my friends were so surprised and shocked at the things I'd been doing.

It was so fun to see different people coming along and learning how to witness and how to teach other people about Jesus and what He's all about. They can see the Family and how we live communally. All these things really impress and inspire other people, because from their point of view, Christianity means going to church on Sunday. But we present it in a different way and it attracts other people to come along.

Life in a small Home

After high school, I decided to join the Family full time. I was living with my mother at that time. There were a lot of fears: fear of losing my freedom, fear of not being able to live the standard, and fear about my mother not allowing me to leave home. But I knew deep down in my heart that I couldn't stay on the fence for long; I had to make a choice and I did. Thanks to the keys and the awesome miracle power from our Miracle Performer, He gave me the strength and helped to touch my mother's heart to let me go. She even supported me monthly and gave me her car to use.

So I moved in and started my Babes Course. During the first six months in the Family I learned many beautiful lessons.

I was in a small Home in Sydney. There was James, his wife Jasmine who has Huntington's dis-

"The life of a missionary is not the easiest, but it is the greatest life you can ever have."

ease, and a single mother (Lynn) with four boys from 7 to 15. There were a lot of heavy battles because we were really trying to go over the top by winning new Active members, supporters, and getting *Activated* subscriptions. Many times we would cry on each other's shoulders. Because of the lack of personnel, many times I would make breakfast, have devotions with the kids, cook lunch, take the kids for get-out, and cook dinner—all in one day. And on top of that we tried to go out witnessing.

Even though I had a lot of things to do, and sometimes I didn't have the strength to do it anymore, I knew that despite the battles I faced, it was still better than working and living in the System. I knew deep down in my heart I had made the right choice. The life of a missionary is not the easiest, but it is the greatest life you can ever have.

Our Home was in a very desperate situation for a long time, but we were still fighting and winning many victories. For example, one of our sheep from China has become our first Active

member, and she wants to join full time in Taiwan after finishing university.

Then all of a sudden, the Lord called me to go to Taiwan. It was a tough decision. Even though there were a lot of wonderful things going on there where I was, it seemed like the Lord had another place for me. Many times I would cry myself to sleep, because the calling was so strong, yet I knew I couldn't just tell my Home that the Lord was calling me somewhere else. The family I was living with was like a family I never had. I love James and Lynn more than my father and mother, because they are my real mum and dad (Matt. 12:48–50). I love each of the kids in my Home, because they are my real younger brothers. I feel the pain that James is going through because of his wife being so sick. My heart breaks for Lynn, a single mother carrying the responsibility of taking care of her children, despite the fact that her husband and her first four kids left the Family. I saw the need to be there for them, because I love them dearly.

Finding and following His will

Then I heard about a YA/SGA camp that was going to happen in Taiwan and I was invited to go. I was so happy and thrilled about the camp. On the other hand, I still didn't know how to present it to my Home. I prayed and I gave the Lord my will. I said to our sweet Jesus, "If it is Your will for me to stay here and work with this family who are in a desperate situation, then I am happy to do that." I told the Lord that if it was really His will for me to go to Taiwan, then He would have to do the miracle to make it happen.

Dear Grandpa gave me a beautiful message from Heaven (thank you, Grandpa!), saying that if I delight myself in the Lord, He would fulfill the desire of my heart. So I got the courage to explain to James the plan that the Lord had shown me. James was very happy for me, God bless him. He got the vision, and he knew that the day would come when I would move on.

So then I knew I was going to Taiwan. But I didn't know where to get the funds! I wasn't experienced in

fundraising, and most of the time I was at home base so that I could set others free to go out and witness. I was expecting a miracle of God, if it was really His will for me to go.

Just two months before the YA/SGA camp, my father visited me in Sydney. Thanks to the keys of the Kingdom, he bought me the airplane tickets to Taiwan without my even asking. Thank You, Jesus! What a miracle! He also paid for a ho-

tel stay for Faith (SGA, James's daughter) and Renee (SGA, Lynn's daughter) when we went to Hong Kong for a visit after the camp.

So our wonderful miracle worker, our dear Husband, is doing miracles for us. It is amazing to see what He said in prophecy being fulfilled before my very eyes. I am ready for the wonderful things that Jesus has promised.

Thank you so much, James and Lynn, for making it possible for me to be here. I am the fruit of all your hard work! And I would like to tell each one of you children of David how thankful I am to be here, to fight with each of you in the spirit, to be part of the greatest movement in the Endtime.

"Come, take the stand, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder,

"March on together to our destiny!"

Not too far gone for Jesus

**By Faithy Elan,
Madagascar**

I was born in France into a modest family. My mother had heart problems from birth that made her very weak, and she went to be with Jesus when I was 12 years old.

After my mom died I started to fear death. We were living in a very old house, and I believe that it was haunted, as I could feel presences at night, and used to experience terrible fear when it got dark. Sometimes I couldn't sleep because of those terrors. It was horrible! Those fears were a living hell for me. It wasn't that I was afraid of dying, but I was afraid of death itself, of the unknown, and of the black side of the spirit world.

I kept those fears to myself, as they were too big for me to open up and tell anyone about, and I knew that the people around me didn't have the answers anyway.

My dad was not able to take care of us. He was not a bad person, but had problems with drinking and was quite irresponsible. So we went to be with my grandma, and when she died after two years, my brother and I stayed at our school at night

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(it had sleeping accommodations for students). There, thank the Lord, I started sleeping better as the place was not spooky like the old house where I had lived with my grandmother. I stopped having such fear at night, but I was still very afraid of death.

At this time my aunt and her husband adopted us. Sad to say, I was a very rebellious teen and I treated my aunt very ungratefully.

A “bad” girl

It was at this time that I rejected the Lord in my life, and I chose to be a “bad girl.” Actually, what I was rejecting was the System, but I used that as an excuse to shoplift, drink heavily, and indulge in drugs.

I joined the Communist Youth Movement and became one of the local leaders. But after a time, I decided that I didn’t like it anymore (mainly because of the strict discipline), and I left. I then became more involved in drugs and considered myself an anarchist. My motto was “No God and no master!” I totally rejected anything that had to do with God in my life, and ridiculed and

made fun of the few people I knew who believed in Him.

I really wanted to know more about the spirit world, though, which was very real and also very frightening to me. I was fascinated by the occult, as I thought that there were some answers there. On one occasion, I had an encounter with a demon, and that scared the hell out of me. I didn’t want to go through that again.

I started experimenting with sex, but since I was rejecting the Lord and His Spirit of love, I didn’t have the right attitude about it, so my love life was miserable. After having sex with a musician nine years older than me, I fell madly in love with him. But I didn’t know how to express my feelings, so I tried to attract his attention by doing all kinds of crazy things. I just didn’t know how to say “I love you.” I made love with dozens of guys before I joined the Family, but I never said “I love you” to any of them.

I became so sad and desperate that I tried to kill myself. One night I was supposed to go to a rock concert some miles away, so I drank and drank till I was completely drunk. Then I borrowed a friend’s bicycle and rode it out onto the highway. I wanted to end it all. I don’t know what happened next, as I had an accident and woke up at the hospital.

Slowed down the hard way

I had a serious concussion, as I had apparently suffered a bad blow to my head, and I had to stay in the hospital for a little while. But it was exactly what I needed, as my head was so hard that the Lord had to literally break it to be able to enter in! Before that, I thought that I was super intelligent, but after this accident I sometimes had difficulty remembering certain things. I became afraid that I would stay like that forever, and it humbled me.

I started to realize that my “friends” were only interested in me because I always had a bit of money, and I was very generous with it—buying drugs for them, entertaining them, paying for their beers or their movies, taking the whole gang to eat pizzas. Actually, I was trying to show how “cool” I was, and in some

ways, I was trying to buy a bit of love, friendship, and acceptance. But the emptiness inside was very difficult to bear. After my accident I started to take heavier drugs.

By this time I wanted answers, so I started traveling around, hitchhiking, staying in places for some days or weeks, getting little jobs to survive. I did many things: selling Christmas trees in the streets, working in a hospital, working at a snow recreational center for kids, mounting pieces for motors, soldering pieces of metal, harvesting grapes, begging on the streets, etc. I was an expert at shoplifting and was doing it all the time.

Getting slowed down

A friend and I hitchhiked to the south of France and stayed for a while in Nice. We used to “provision” our meals at the university restaurant. It was there one day that I saw a young man distributing New Testaments. Without knowing why, I went to see him and asked for one. The guy then started to witness to me, but at this time I despised all Christians, and I didn’t even want to listen

to him. But then something happened that changed the whole picture.

As he was talking to me, I saw a very special light in his eyes, and right away I perceived that it was Jesus. Jesus was looking straight at me! I remember thinking, *This guy has something that I don’t have, and I want to have it too!* The connection was finally made.

This little New Testament became my companion. I went to Paris, and there my friend and I joined a gang that was experimenting with a new type of drug. My friend got afraid of the whole thing and left, but I remained in Paris.

But even though I was still into the drug scene, I was different than I had been before. Reading the Gospels was a wonderful experience for me, because through them I came to know Jesus and His Word. I just fell in love with Jesus. I started talking to Him and asking Him to be my Friend. It sounds crazy, because just a few weeks earlier I was proclaiming that I was an atheist. But then I just started to talk with Him and it felt so good.

I remember the day when I told Him, “Listen, Jesus, I think You are a very nice Guy and I like You a lot. I want You to be my Friend and my Buddy. I want to talk to You and tell You things, but I want to talk to You face to face. I don’t want to have to say all those prayers that I learned when I was a child, because they didn’t mean anything!” That was my prayer, and somehow I knew that Jesus was happy.

The funny thing at that time was that I thought that I was the only person in the world who knew Jesus in this way. He was *my* personal Jesus, my Buddy! But even though I wanted Him to be close by, I still considered myself the master of my destiny. This was good for a short while, but, as you can guess, the Lord had more for me. So He put the pressure on.

“I thought that I was the only person in the world who knew Jesus in this way. He was my personal Jesus, my Buddy!”

One day, when I was on drugs, I had a vivid experience. I looked at my friends and each one had an ugly demon on his or her face, as if they were demons themselves! I told one of them, “Look, man, you have a devil right on you! You *are* a devil!”

To this he replied in a very strange voice: “Ha! Yes! Look at yourself in the mirror!”

I looked, and to my horror, I saw that my face was demonic, too! I cried, “No, no, it’s not true! I love Jesus! I belong to Jesus! I am not a demon!”

Giving in

At that time, I had a boyfriend who I had feelings for, loving feelings that were not just related to sex. I actually wanted to do things for him and not just do things for myself. (It’s no wonder, because as soon as I opened a door in my life for Jesus, He started to straighten out a few things in my heart too.) But then my boyfriend dumped me and it broke my heart.

I remember taking a trip under the influence of heavy drugs. When I went back to where I was living, I was alone and feeling very sick; the “good” ef-

fects of the drug were gone and all that was left were the “bad” effects. I was a nervous wreck—weak and sick in body and spirit. My heart was broken.

On top of that, the little apartment where I was living with at least 10 other people was locked. Nobody was in and I didn’t have the key. What a mess! I tried to open the door, but without success. There I was—sick, alone, and so miserable.

I sat in front of the door and cried and cried. I was so lost. I broke down and said, “Lord, You didn’t create me to destroy myself with these drugs. I know that there is something else for me to do with my life. I want You now, not just to be my Friend, but I want You to be my Master and my King. Please, show Yourself to me and I will serve You for the rest of my life.”

That was what the Lord wanted, and at that very moment, the miracle happened! He came in in full force and instantly healed my heart and my body. I felt an incredible peace. I got saved and filled with the



Spirit right away. I heard His voice speaking to me for the first time—not a still, small voice, but a strong and firm one. He told me to leave that place and to go to the south of France and then He would show me what to do.

I said yes to the Lord, and then the same voice told me where I could find the key to open the studio. It was in another city. I took the train there, and sure enough, my roommates were there. Everybody was sitting in a circle, ready for a drug party. They told me to come in and to join them, but I said that I just wanted the key and that I would leave the next day. Then I left, without even the temptation to try a little bit of their stuff.

My mind blown

A little while later, a friend (the only one that I could call a real friend) came and told me that he had gone to the house where my roommates were and they had told him I was leaving. He said that he had come to go with me.

Now I will explain more about this boy. We called him “Bebert,” and



he was a sweet but completely crazy guy. He had traveled to India and other places and was a real junkie, a drug addict. But he was the only one who believed in Jesus and was the only one who knew that Jesus was my Friend. Some years before he had joined a group called “Les Enfants de Dieu” (the Children of God) for a short while. Even though he had stayed only a month with them, he kept on talking about them.

One time, I saw him banging his head on the wall after taking heavy drugs, and screaming, “I want to go back to the Family! It was the only place I ever was happy! I want to go back with them!” Poor boy! It was scary and pitiful, and of course, at that time I got the wrong message. I thought that those Enfants de Dieu had really screwed him up, and if he was crazy like that it was because of them. Ha!

I liked to talk about Jesus with him, but I would get irritated every time he would mention something about this “sect,” as I considered them. For me,

Reverend Moon, Hare Krishna, Les Enfants de Dieu and other weirdos were *not* for me. As you can anticipate, I was in for a big surprise!

The next day we started hitchhiking, and it went smoothly. Bebert and I kept on talking about Jesus, and it was super nice. One day we were walking down the street, and Bebert explained to me how Jesus said that if we live for Him He will supply all our needs. I heartily agreed and said, "Yes, yes, I really believe it!" To our surprise, at that very moment, we found a bunch of coins on the ground! The Lord was blowing my mind more and more.

One day a freak took us to his little hideout, and after a nice meal, he and Bebert started talking about their "spiritual" experiences. It so happened that this man used to belong to a sect led by Guru Maharaji, so Bebert explained that he had had an experience with Les Enfants de Dieu. The guy mentioned that he had met them recently on the street and that they had given him an invitation to go to Marchastel, one of their "Colonies." I was not

really listening to the conversation, but somehow I heard that part.

Some days later we were in the mountains, and there I took drugs for the last time. (I forgot to say that I left Paris with a supply of amphetamines nicely tucked in my little bag.) The whole time, we kept on talking about Jesus. As we walked up the mountain, the effect of the drugs wore off, but I was high on Jesus.

Then I saw an adorable little flower. I went closer to look at it, and I realized that I had never taken the time before to look closely at a little flower, and there it was, so delicate and beautiful. I said, "Lord, You made this world perfect. Here I am, destroying myself with this shit!" Conviction took over and I got mad at the whole thing. I then reached for the drugs in my bag and, under the horrified stare of Bebert, I dumped the whole lot into the abyss. That was it! Good riddance to filthy rubbish!

Later, one afternoon, I went to a quiet place and I started praying. I told the Lord that I wanted to serve Him wherever He wanted me to. At this time I even thought about being a nun, as that was the only serious point of reference for me about girls serving God. But, thank the Lord, He definitely knew better than that. Whew!



Faithy with her daughter Laura, observing a chameleon from Madagascar

That night we put our sleeping bags in an old sheepfold to sleep, but I had an eerie feeling. Suddenly I got attacked from the dark side of the spirit world in a very big way. I left the sheep pen running, and I ran and ran through the mountains. The Enemy was after me and I could feel his presence so strongly! It was a horrible oppression! I was terrified, and I was not on drugs or anything! The Evil One was there in person!

My friend tried to help me, but I told him to go away. I could see the Devil all around him too! I fell on the ground and started praying and praying, but the Enemy was still there! And suddenly, I heard a big strong voice telling me, "Go see the Children of God!"

I said, "Yes, Lord, I will!" At that very moment, the Enemy fled. Just like that! It was quite a spooky experience, but it is the truth. I guess the Lord knew what a stubborn person I was, and He knew that nobody could have convinced me to join, so He had to do it Himself in a supernatural way.

Home

We knew that Les Enfants de Dieu were in Marchastel, so we headed in that direction, and a couple of days later we arrived at their place. We could hear some music inside. I pushed the door open, and there they were. Jonas was leading an inspiration and I felt the Spirit taking me in. I knew that was the place for me.

I joined in and started singing and dancing right away. I guess I joined on the spot, because I never left the Family after that! The funny thing is that I didn't know anything about the Family, except what Bebert had told me. (It was not exactly flattering, as the poor guy had quite a distorted idea of the Family, and he left a short while later.) I just knew that the Lord had sent me there, and that I was supposed to be there.

But it took me a while to adjust. Just to show how far gone I was, the first time a brother asked if I would like to read a MO Letter, I told him in the gentle and delicate language that I was using at this time that he could %*@ (a very bad French word!) his false prophet! I was really raw, as you can see!

It took me a little while to understand what the Family was all about. But a short time later I read a MO Letter, and I got hooked, as the Word touched my heart. I said, "This man writes things that I thought only I was thinking. I have read tons of books and I haven't found anybody saying things like he does. But this is what I was always thinking, without knowing how to express it. This man is a prophet of God, I just know it!"

I happily discovered that all by myself, and since then, nothing or nobody could ever shake this conviction out of me. I loved Grandpa! Better yet, I liked those MO Letters so much that I wanted to be sure everybody read them.

The Lord definitely loved me and knew that despite my rough appearance and less-than-sophisticated manners, I was called to be a disciple. To help me make it, He sent someone very special: dear Jacques Elan, who popped into my life a short while after I joined. Talk about enduring love! Day after day, he read the Word with me, prayed for me, explained with

extremely infinite patience all that I needed to know, and helped me through my numerous babe's battles. He has a shepherd's heart and he always put the Word first—and still does, God bless him! He was a fantastic sample to me.

It took just a short time for my little heart to melt and I fell in love with

him. Granted, I fell in love with his art first. I loved the cute little illustrated MO Letters he put on the walls; it made them so much easier to understand. But hey, that's another story all by itself, so I guess I'll end here.

But let me add that after those events 26 years ago, all the fears of death that were in my heart vanished forever and never came back. Instead, they were replaced by a strong longing for Heaven. I also had a beautiful "life after life" experience six months after I joined, when I actually went to Heaven and had a far-out sneak preview. But that's also another story. ...



Jacques and Faithy are shown in this pic taken in 2000 in Brazil, with their five children and little granddaughter, all in the Family. (Top, L-R) Virginie Ruth, Jacques, Vincent-Josh, Faithy, Piper (Melody's husband). (Bottom, L-R) Claire, Melody with little daughter Alicia Jolie, and Laura. Gini (Virginie Ruth) now has a little boy named Roland, and Melody is expecting number two.

Nothing better

By Gala (24,
Russian), India

When I was 13, I was given a little black-and-white Family poster (“Why Worry”) and I wrote to the address on it. I got a letter back, and later an invitation to go to Moscow for a three-day Christian seminar, so I went with my mom.

Our family wasn’t religious at all, but we were curious about Jesus. Besides, it was free! I remember the amazing atmosphere of love and all the hugs at that seminar. There was such a good measure of the Holy Spirit—you could almost feel it.

In a month I got another invitation, this time for a one-week seminar. After those seminars, I decided I wanted to become a missionary.

I’m not the kind of a person who is easily influenced. I am a very analytical person, and when thinking about what I should become in the future, I would always say to myself: *There are so many pros and cons, so many factors that I don’t know. How can I for sure know that I want this or that profession?* So for me to receive Jesus in my heart, to believe something I didn’t have full knowledge and understanding of, and all the more to want to dedicate all my life to it—that was a miracle!

But then I was only 13 and I was told that I could be a missionary at home, so I had to go home. There was no Family Home in my town, so I received Letters and lit through the East European Mail Ministry (EE MM).

God gave me such a hunger for the Word. I read the New Testament several times. I was always waiting for the new MM letters with lit, and there was always so little of it, it seemed.

After two years I visited a Family Home in another city, as I was taking a trip with my family and it was on the way. There I got a pile of reading material, *Treasures*, and some Letters. I was so happy about that, and I read it all in two days.

I was starving for the Word, and it got to the point that I had already read everything that I was receiving from the EE MM, and there was no other way for me to get fed. I think I reread everything I had hundreds of times!

After two more years, another team came to my town for a faith trip and they stayed at my place for a week. They invited me to come visit them, as their Home was not so far from my town. So after a couple of months, I visited.

By this time I had a job with a good salary and good chances of building a career. I had my own apartment and really appreciated that, as I had never had my own private room. I was also getting a higher education. All that was a lot for a 17-year-old Russian.

So I remember thinking, or rather fantasizing: *What if they offer me the chance of joining? Will I? I don't know. It's so nice to have at least what I have now. I can still be a Christian. I give my tithe. I read the Bible.*

Then I thought: *But do I really believe the Bible? Do I believe that we are*

living in the Endtime? Do I believe in life after death? Yes, definitely! Then all that I have doesn't matter! It will all be gone one day—soon, in fact! (Countdown to Armageddon had just come out and I had had a chance to watch it.) And so if I really believe in the Bible, how can I wish any less than to give my all? It's quite little compared to all the promised blessings.

So I was quite pragmatic and logical in my thinking! My decision was quick. I knew that my answer would be yes. As it was, nobody asked me to join, ha! And since I was a very shy person, I didn't talk about it either.

After several months, I visited the Perm Home. I had been keeping in touch with someone there, and



she invited me to visit for a week. When I was leaving for the airport she asked me, “How did you like it?”

I said, “I liked it very much. I would also like to live like this one day.”

She said, “When?”

I said, “I don’t know.” I had completely lost faith that one day I would be allowed to join. I had asked about it so many times and after being told several times, “You can be a missionary at home,” I thought that it wouldn’t be polite to ask again, especially as I didn’t feel I had any special skills. I didn’t feel that I could witness really well, or that I was a really nice person. I didn’t even really know what it would mean for me “to join,” but somehow I just felt it was something that I wanted and had to do!



So when I was told, “When you have your vacation, you can come and live with us longer and see if you like it,” I was shocked. I was happy, and in my heart I decided right away that I would join no matter what, if only I would be allowed to do so.

In half a year I went to the Home, and several weeks after that I joined!

A lot of times when reading the babes’ course I had the feeling that I already knew some of the things I was reading. I believe that the Lord taught me and led me through His Spirit even before I joined, since there was no Family Home in my town. However it’s so nice to have the confirmation in the New Wine and be sure of these things. I mean things like the truths in “Be So Happy,” “The Law of Love,” spiritual truths like realizing that your dignity is in humility and not in pride, etc. These truths are a great treasure to them that know and believe them—to us.

I can’t express how appreciative I am for all the New Wine that comes out regularly on such a variety of topics that I am so interested in—how to commu-

“Do I believe that we are living in the Endtime? Do I believe in life after death? Yes, definitely! Then all that I have doesn’t matter! It will all be gone one day—soon, in fact!”

nicate with God and get ahold of all the power He has available for us, predictions of the future, keys to understanding people, the spirit world, etc. It's more than fascinating and is such a treasure!

Now that I have been in the Family for five years (the last one and a half years in India, where the Lord led me to move after Russia became a sensitive country), I cannot see or wish for anything better for myself. I am so happy to be here. The Lord is fulfilling all my heart's desires and every day *is* getting better! I know that I can only be happy in the Family.

“I can't express how appreciative I am for all the New Wine that comes out regularly on such a variety of topics that I am so interested in. ...”

Of course, I have my share of battles, and sometimes I compare myself with other people who seem to be more useful or talented, and then I am tempted to think that maybe I could achieve more in my life if I were doing something more defined or clear than just being “a missionary,” but time and again the Lord points out that I don't have to be anything but His bride, and that I don't have to worry about my future as long as I am trying to do my best today. I don't have to be great in the eyes of others to be great in the eyes of the Lord. Like the GN “Through It All” (ML #3394, GN 1001) shows, to believe and to persevere is the key element in being a “success” for the Lord!



He can heal *anything!*

By Israel, Mexico

Before I joined the Family I was working 365 days of the year in a restaurant owned by my family. Late in the evening I would go out dancing and drinking, until finally one day I got really sick of it all and told the Lord that I didn't want any more of that kind of life.

Then one day I started feeling very poorly. I went to see the doctor, thinking it couldn't be much, although I was having difficulty walking. The doctor told me I had cancer and that he needed to operate right away or I would die.

I felt like someone had pulled the rug out from under me. When I returned home, my brothers told me I should go to the capital to get a second opinion from some other doctors. So I went by bus to the capital and visited a specialist. He confirmed that I did in fact have cancer, and that it was a life-and-death situation. He didn't even let me go home, but immediately admitted me to the hospital and prepared me for surgery.

After the surgery, the doctor wanted to give me radiation, but I decided to trust the Lord. One of my aunts, Irma, never stopped praying for me. I asked the Lord to give me another opportunity to live, and told Him that if He did, I would give my life to serve Him.

Two weeks after the operation I went in for a checkup, and the doctor who attended me, after checking my latest lab tests, told me that miraculously my cancer was all gone. What a miracle! I can only thank the Lord for His mercy. So a little over a month later I decided to keep my promise to God to serve Him if He healed me, and I joined a Family Home here in Mexico. Thank the Lord! I want to let everyone know that Jesus has power to heal *any* disease, no matter how serious it is.

It has been many months since my operation, and every day I am getting better and regaining my strength. My life has changed so much. I have some battles each day, as it has

been a big change for me living this lifestyle, and sometimes I feel discouraged. The Lord knows I am weak and it is only by His grace that I can go forward each day. I claim the promise, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil.1:6).

Right now I am working in Puebla, Mexico, in the Home where I joined. I am very happy here serving the Lord.

My life has changed greatly and quite miraculously. To start with, my body is working just great. It is a miracle of the Lord! I have also seen great changes in my life spiritually since I joined the Family. I have stopped worrying about myself and my personal “needs,” such as having a house, a car, and other

“The doctor who attended me, after checking my latest lab tests, told me that miraculously my cancer was all gone.”

luxuries. The Lord has placed in my heart a desire to serve Him with everything in me whatever the cost may be, until the last minute of my life. I have come to accept the brethren in the Family as my true family, even over my flesh family. I have learned to witness and tell others about the Lord—His love and power.

I am very thankful for the second chance the Lord gave me to live, and to live for Him.



Israel at our national retreat in September 2002. He was in charge of the dining room.

The sign of the lantern

By David (28,
formerly Alkor),
Russia

“I once was a lonely student, I had no place to go.” To be correct, I had a cold dormitory where I used to live with my friend. We shared many boring days together. One day he ran in all excited. “Look what I have for you! I know you are interested in this kind of stuff!”

It was a poster about Heaven and Jesus, with a little prayer at the end. *Strange*, I thought. *I never was interested in religion!* As doubtful as I was, I memorized the prayer, to save for the worst times in my life.

Sure enough ... one day my friends brought us some Chinese marijuana (known for its bad quality), and I smoked it for seven days in a row until I had reached a nonsensical state. The darkness of the world began to flood my days. Everywhere I went, I would see demons or evil creatures dragging me down and tempting me to commit suicide.

That’s when I remembered the prayer and whispered, “Jesus! Come!” Wow! At the exact moment that I prayed, all the cloudiness and heaviness in my drowning mind vanished. The devils ran away! That was an experience that I will never forget. Then I knew that God exists and that Jesus is alive.

But I still continued in my old lifestyle. Still smoked marijuana, still drank, but I knew that there was something up there. I knew that God was watching over me.

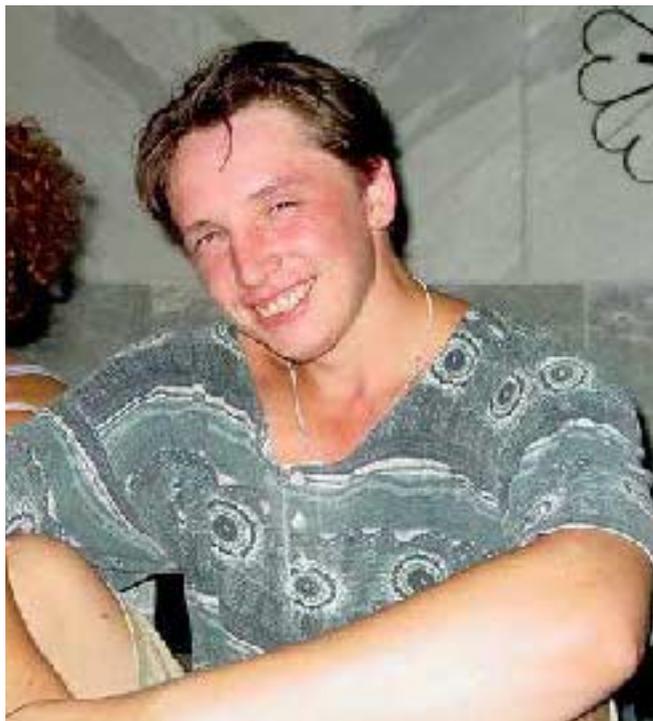
The days passed, and I continued to drink most of the time. Then I met two girls who were fun to hang around with, and as we all liked to talk about “high and deep” subjects, we had something in common. They were artists, searching for the truth. There was communication between our souls, because I was searching too.

I liked to argue with one of them about God and different religious doctrines. (Little did I know that she had just met the Lord with a crazy Family guy named Martin who had run

after her on the street. He barely spoke Russian at that time, but God bless him, he had yielded to the whispers!) So in order to be equipped for this kind of religious argument, I read the whole Bible. I think that was another step in my growth.

I graduated from university and went to the army for a year. She (the Bible girl) grew in her knowledge of the Lord and started to write me long letters, sending literature. The little seed of faith in my heart started to grow, but my analytical nature was in the way.

Soon after I finished my year in the army, I met some of her new friends and they witnessed to me



too! Everything about them was good. They were so happy, just the way I wanted to be happy, but some invisible wall was hindering my entrance to their beautiful world.

They gave me the *Countdown to Armageddon* video to watch, and that was it! This video blew my mind! The change was drastic!

Then I began to look everywhere for the friends who had given me that tape, but they had left on a long road trip. I didn't know where they had gone or when I would see them again.

All I had was my Bible, and as I read it, I saw every verse with completely new eyes. The Word stroked my heart like a laser, until I was melted into a new creature! I stopped smoking and drinking from one day to the next, and started to memorize verses like crazy. I committed myself to the Lord.

But once I failed in my commitment. I met my old friends at my parents' village. I found I was

“Everything about them was good. They were so happy, just the way I wanted to be happy, but some invisible wall was hindering my entrance to their beautiful world.”

looking at them with new eyes, but they still looked at me with the old. I found myself in a circle, passing a joint around. When my turn came, I smoked it. *What am I doing?* The second time: *What about my pledge to the Lord?* When the third turn came, I stood up and said, “No, guys! I can’t!”

I rushed into the darkness of the street, absolutely disgusted with myself. How could I? After all that the Lord had done for me! In tears, I ran, feeling terrible. My mind was so muddled, I kept bumping into one tree after another. How could I have done it again? *You drunk, sloppy swine!* I kept telling myself.

There was only one street lantern in my village, and it wasn’t working. I pleaded: “Lord Jesus, forgive me! I’m not worthy of You! But if there is still hope for me, give me a sign!” At this same moment,

miraculously the lantern turned on and the light shone down on me brightly. There I was, standing in the middle of the dark world under the light of a single lantern. That was the sign from Him! I just knew it! I was crying, and I knew that I was forgiven. By the grace of God and with all my abilities, I am now serving Him here in Russia. I am doing everything that I can to reach the world.



Here I am with my wife Love. She was a great influence in my spiritual life and growth.