

# HeartCry

## MAGAZINE



## TESTIMONIES TO GOD'S SAVING POWER

*From HeartCry Missionaries Around the Globe*



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# HeartCry

MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Welcome to the Fall Edition of the HeartCry magazine. It is our prayer that you are growing in the grace of Christ, laboring in His Name, and looking forward to His return. He who called you is faithful to preserve you until the end and to provide you with all that is necessary to live a life that is pleasing to Him. Therefore, "prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). Let your confidence be found not in human will or strength, but in God's decrees concerning you and His strong providence in working out what He has ordained. You did not choose Him, but He chose you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit and that your fruit would remain (John 15:16). You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He prepared beforehand so that you would walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). This is your confidence and hope. Therefore, do not be slothful; rather, be diligent to obtain the prize and to live your life for His glory.

At the very beginning of this edition, it is our joy to announce to you that our new website is up and running ([www.heartcrymissionary.com](http://www.heartcrymissionary.com))! We have worked for over a year to create the most informative site possible. Our goal has been four-fold. First, we wanted our site to glorify God, who has been our Patron and Helper throughout the many years of this ministry. Like David, we desire to proclaim His praises and the wondrous works that He has done (Psalm 78:4). Secondly, we wanted to encourage our donors by giving them a glimpse of all that God has accomplished through their prayers and support. Thirdly, we wanted to remind everyone that the great task of taking the Gospel to the world has not yet been fully accomplished. We must push away all distractions, put our hands to the plow, and labor until the task is done. Finally, we wanted to provide resources in as many languages as possible to help as many Christians as possible to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. We hope and pray with all our heart that the goals we have set forth will be accomplished; that God will be glorified; and that all who visit our site will be challenged, encouraged, and better equipped to labor for Christ's cause in the Great Commission.

As we were uploading our missionaries' testimonies to the new HeartCry website, we were both blessed and challenged. In some instances, we were even moved to tears. For this reason, we felt compelled to dedicate an entire magazine to the saving work of God among our missionaries. If these testimonies are a blessing to you, then please go to our new website, where you will find over two hundred similar testimonies of God's grace.

The HeartCry Staff

HeartCry Magazine is a quarterly magazine free of charge to all who request it. The primary purpose of our magazine is to share something of the great work that God is doing in the world through indigenous missions.

HeartCry is a missionary society with one great and overriding passion: that God's Name be great among the nations (Malachi 1:11) and that the Lamb receive the full reward for His suffering (Revelation 7:9-10).

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## New Website Features

At a glance >

New introductory videos

Mission updates

Unreached people of the day

Missionary Spotlight

Mission fact of the day

Event Calendar

Plus:

Regional Coordinator Blogs  
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Multilingual Sermon Archive  
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Mobile Ready



# The One True Gospel



“The HeartCry Missionary Society exists to glorify God through the establishment of biblical churches by equipping and mobilizing indigenous churches and missionaries in the least evangelized areas of the world.”

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# A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

True Repentance

## AFRICA

### MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: MARC GLASS

REGIONAL REPORTS



### SAM OLUOCH

KISUMU, KENYA - Pastor

*Formerly an agricultural officer with the Kenyan government, Sam has been in the ministry since 1999. In November of 2000, he teamed up with Grace Baptist Church in Kisumu to begin the work of church planting in western Kenya, near Lake Victoria. Sam holds a B.A. in theology from Highlands Theological College in Scotland. He and his wife Melly have four children.*

I grew up knowing that God exists and punishes sinners, but this knowledge did not help me come closer to God in repentance. Nevertheless, I did love the things associated with God and would slavishly visit any church's service on Sunday. Many times I attended services even though I was suffering from hangovers from the previous night of drunkenness. My common practice was to sit in the last pew at the back of the church and make sure that I left very quickly after the service. I did not want anyone to confront me with the truth of the Gos-

pel or the testimony of their salvation.

One particular Sunday in 1990, I visited a Pentecostal church. Since I was sober, I decided to sit in a pew closer to the preacher this time. After the service, I did not run away like I normally would; I remained to chat. During this time, a lady came and shared with me a very unclear Gospel presentation. All that she kept telling me was that I should not play games with God and that I was cheating myself in thinking that I was right with Him. She urged me to make my ways right with the Lord.

After I went back to my house, the conviction of my sinfulness was so heavy upon me that I could not even take my lunch. I locked myself in my bedroom and found myself crying and praying that God would forgive me of my sins and help me begin a true walk with Him. After about one hour, I felt relieved of my sins and assured that God had accepted me.

I was later baptized in this same church; but after a few months, I left in order to attend a Baptist church, to which a young woman had invited me. I left because there were so many fights in the church and because some of the young people said I was not saved because I did not speak in tongues. I had sincerely longed to speak in tongues, but it had kept eluding me.

At this Baptist church, I found my former high school mates, who were now born again and seeking to please God. I saw that they were truly serving the Lord, even though they did not speak in tongues. This motivated me to serve with them. Eventually, in





"...I was cheating myself in thinking that I was right with Him."

September of 1999, I resigned from my employment as an agricultural officer with the Kenyan government and became the pastor of this church. In November of that same year, I married Melly, the same young woman who had originally invited me to the church.

From the beginning of my walk with God, I read through the Bible every year, and the doctrines of the Bible began to take shape in my mind and build my faith. As I grew, I began to question some things that were obviously unbiblical in our church, but the leaders had greater authority. When I finally became the pastor, I decided that there was no way I could allow these unbiblical practices to continue. However, the church did not want to change, and I was forced to resign after only one year of ministry. I did not know what the future would hold.

At that time, I was also a student at a Bible college under the supervision of Trinity Baptist Church in Nairobi. By God's providence, a missionary from that church was planning to come to my town of Kisumu for church-planting work. We decided to join forces, and Grace Baptist Church of Kisumu was formed in November of 2000. We began by meeting in my house with my two daughters, my wife, and the missionary couple. In December of 2001, we constituted the church with twelve members, and it has been growing ever since. Today, we have thirty members. From 2005 to 2007, I also

"I locked myself in my bedroom and found myself crying and praying that God would forgive me of my sins..."

enrolled as a student with Highlands Theological College in Scotland and graduated with a B.A. in Theology.

It is my desire that sound biblical teaching might be carried far and wide in my country of Kenya. Christ is the gift of God and the free sacrifice given

to bear the sins of many. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Christ is the second Person of the Trinity and is fully God and fully man. The Bible is God's Word, and it contains all that we need to know and do. It should be preached in its totality because it bears God's authority and is

the power of God to save sinners and keep them for the Day of Glory. Christ came for the first time to accomplish His saving work here on earth. When He returns, He will establish His Kingdom and rule over all forever and ever. These and many other biblical doctrines are my passion.

On the family front, I am married to Macolet (Melly), and we have been blessed with two daughters. I am also a parent to two of my late brother's children, who were orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. My daughter Lois is fifteen years old and in the tenth grade. My daughter Nila is thirteen years old and in the eighth grade. My niece Billian just finished secondary school and is waiting to go either to a university or a college, depending on her exams. Her brother Cornell finished a marketing course last year and is now hunting for a job.

# MISHECK KUMWENDA

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

Missions Coordinator

*Misheck has an engineering background and has been a member of Kabwata Baptist Church since 1991. In March of 2012, he began coordinating Kabwata's missions and church-planting efforts throughout Africa.*



I was born on the morning of February 11, 1957, in Chingwele, Matero, Lusaka. My parents were Presbyterians and attended the Dutch Reformed Church in Matero. At the age of two, I was baptized in this church. Later, my family joined the Methodist Church, which eventually became the United Church of Zambia (UCZ). I attended Sunday school from the age of eight, and my association with this church made me believe that I was a Christian. I was even confirmed in the UCZ Church while I was attending Hillcrest Technical School in Livingstone in 1971.

Throughout my college A-Level studies, I believed that I was a Christian, until I was challenged regarding my salvation by Pastor Joe Imakando of Emmasdale Church. On Tuesday, September 18, 1979, after I had returned home for vacation work during the summer break, Pastor Imakando met me in my house as he waited to take my younger brother Steady to a prayer meeting. He asked me if I was a Christian. I answered with absolute certainty that I was, as was everyone in our family. He asked me why I believed this, and I answered that we all

attended United Church of Zambia every Sunday. I also told him that I was confirmed as a church member in Livingstone. He then asked me whether or not I was saved, and I said that I was not. I further added that only God knows who will be saved on the Day of Judgment, and even He could know this only after He had examined the evidence and made a decision. Pastor Imakando insisted that we could and should know now whether or not we are saved.

Pastor Joe was in a hurry to go to the prayer meeting, so he gave me a tract to read, and then he left with my brother. I read that tract several times, each time questioning the logic that a person could know they were saved before the Judgment Day. I had no quarrels with repentance, but I could not believe that we could be saved and know that we were saved in the present. In my opinion, it was taking things too far. It was too good to be true!

The next afternoon, while walking home from town, there were many deep struggles within me. Because I was distracted by what was going on in my mind, I was nearly run over by a vehicle as I crossed Lumumba Road. As soon as I was safely across, something occurred that I am not able to explain even to this day – I had a visual image of all my past thoughts and philosophies about God. On that day, it became very clear that all my beliefs were grossly flawed and would not benefit me. A profound sadness overcame me, and I became quite depressed. I was still having a serious battle within my soul regarding the possibility of being saved before Judgment Day.

When I arrived home, my sister noticed that I was not myself. She asked if something was wrong, but I lied to her, saying it was only something trivial. After my evening meal, I went to sleep early (about 8 P.M.) with a very troubled mind. I woke up two hours later, read the tract again, and went back to sleep. I repeated this three more times.



Around 4:30 A.M., on Thursday morning, I woke up and read the tract a fifth time. This time, I even prayed the "Sinner's Prayer" that was printed on the last pages of the tract, but nothing changed! I still felt the same! Finally, at 5:15 A.M., I prayed with an attitude of surrender. I prayed my own prayer, and it was possibly the shortest prayer of my life: "God, You are right, and I am wrong."

Immediately, an indescribable feeling of release and relief came over all of my body. I began to laugh and cry for joy at the same time. Wanting not to disturb my younger brother, who was asleep in the same bedroom, I made every effort to control myself. Even as early as it was, I had an overwhelming desire to leave the house, go onto the streets, and hug everyone and tell them that I loved them!

As soon as my brother returned from work that afternoon, I explained to him what had happened to me. He was amazed! Unbeknownst to me, he had prepared a lengthy letter explaining to me how I needed to be saved. He was intending to give it to me sometime when it was convenient. God had overtaken both of us!

What followed this event was a surprise to me. I began yearning to constantly read from the Bible, seek out and partake in all sorts of Christian meetings, and tell as many people as possible about the truth of salvation be-

fore the Day of Judgment. Within three weeks, it also became apparent to me that I was not benefiting from the teachings of my childhood church, particularly when it came to matters of salvation. For this reason, I began to attend Emmasdale Church, where what was preached agreed with what I was reading in the Bible.

The following year, I went to the town of Luanshya to work in the copper mines. There, I began to worship at Luanshya Baptist Church, and I was baptized by immersion as a believer. In 1981, I traveled to the U.K. to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering the Polytechnic Institute in Sunderland. While there, I worshiped at Bethesda Baptist Church, where I worked among the youth. At the Institute, I had fellowship with Scripture Union, Chinese Overseas Christian Mission (of which I

was president for two years), and Campus Crusade for Christ. In 1984, I went to Leeds, where I continued my studies in mechanical engineering. There, I worshiped at Harehills Lane Baptist Church. I taught the Young Peoples Fellowship and Sunday school.

I returned to Zambia in 1988 and worked for a company in Mufulira. During that time, I worshiped at Mufulira Central Baptist Church (now Fairview Baptist). In 1991, I came to the city of Lusaka, and I joined Kabwata Baptist Church, where I now serve as the missions coordinator.

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# Turning to God from Idols

## SOUTH ASIA

## MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: AARON PIKKARAINEN



### GHAN S.

NEPAL - Church Planter

*Ghan S. serves as a leader of a group of pastors with whom HeartCry partners in Nepal. He also pastors his own local congregation. Ghan is married and has two sons and two daughters.*

Until fourteen years ago, I was a Hindu. After finishing my tenth standard exam in school, I began to become involved in politics. I was very much interested in this field and became a key leader of the Nepal Communist Party at the district level. After being involved in politics within the Communist Party, I came to believe that there was no God; but in my heart and mind, I would ask myself, "Who made the universe? How do these planets rotate on time? Who created me? Why do I exist in this world? Why do we die?" I could not get answers to these questions. I had no peace in my heart, even though outwardly I looked joyful.

Our whole family was under the bondage of Satan. Every year, one of my family members would die. My grandfather, my grandmother, my younger sister, my mother, my two sons, and my daughter all died within one year of each other. Later on, my wife faced a problem with headaches and back pain. She became very weak, and at that time, I was also sick and feeble, due to tuberculosis. My weight was normally 65 kg, but I had dropped to 48 kg. I thought that life would be very short, and I would no longer live. I had already known something about Christ, but I used to think that Christianity was a foreign re-

ligion. I did not show any concern toward those who told me about Christ. I was not interested. I had never even thought to follow the true, living God, and I had no desire to do so.

While I was sick, a pastor came to my house and told me about Christ. He said, "In His hand, there is life and death. If you believe in Him, He will uphold your life." Then he prayed for me. Because of this event, I began to think, "So far in my family, most of the members have died, and we are going through pain all the days, months, and years. We will see whether there is power in the Christian God or not."

I started attending a church. God changed my heart, and I felt joy in my heart, which I had never experienced before. In Matthew 9:13, Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." This word encouraged me much. In my understanding from Hinduism, I believed that sinners would be destroyed, and the righteous would be saved. But in Christianity, I found just the opposite. I discovered that Christ came to save the sinners! How marvelous the love of God is through His Son Jesus Christ! When I began, I was thinking only about physical healing in Christ, but I came to know that He is our spiritual healer. In Him, our sins are forgiven, and we have everlasting life!



Over time, God enabled me to grow in grace, and I realized that He was calling me for His work. I left my political leadership and became involved in ministry. God called me to shepherd a flock in a local church, but I faced many challenges financially. In the midst of the difficulties, God allowed me to stand firm in the faith and the work of the kingdom. I was strong because I was confident that I had received a marvelous gift from God, which was a great joy for me.

I continued my ministry, and by God's plan, I had the privilege of joining with HeartCry. I thank God and HeartCry for the support for my family and ministry. It is a great help for me in the work of God's kingdom. I am currently doing pastoral ministry in a local church called Emmanuel Church. Please pray for my ministry there, that I might serve God's people faithfully. Pray for the church members where I am serving, and also pray for my family.



## BARAK K.\*

### NORTH INDIA

#### Church Planter

*Barak K. was a devout Hindu before his conversion. He is now pastoring a church which he started in 2009. Barak is married and has four children.*

**M**y name is Barak K. I am married and have four children: three girls and one boy. My wife and I were engaged and married in 1994. Having come from a Hindu background, we both devoted our lives to living out our Hindu customs. My wife always participated both in my happiness and my sadness. She respected me as a god and would touch my feet every day (bow down before me).

Before coming to Christ, I was involved with a Hindu guru, and I participated in idol worship with my family. For fifteen years, I followed the guru and received his instruction and worshiped him as my lord. I thought that he was blessing my life; but I still did not have peace. In 2002, I heard the Gospel for the first time through one of the servants of God, but I was so committed to Hinduism that I would not embrace the truth or apply it to my life. Then, in 2008, I heard the Gospel from another brother, and he asked me to come to his church, where I could learn more about Jesus Christ. I ignored his invitation, however, and continued to follow my guru's instruction instead.

Then, a few months later, this same brother met me, and for two hours he

shared the story of Jesus Christ with me. Again, he invited me to visit his church. I finally went, and I heard the Gospel message from the Bible. It was then that I realized that I could not go to heaven by following my guru's teachings. Therefore, I decided that I should not follow him anymore.

I committed myself to Jesus and repented of my sins. By God's grace, I quickly experienced real growth in the Lord. I joined the church and began attending the services regularly. I also started reading the New Testament, and a few days later, I purchased a full Bible. I was baptized on December 31, 2008. After that, my wife also accepted Christ and later took baptism. I praise God that everyone in my family is now following Christ. We all are happy in Him!

Over a period of time, God gave us a burden to share the Gospel with others. Although it is very difficult, I count it a privilege to be able to spread the Gospel among our unreached people. We began reaching out to some children through an informal education center which we established with the help of our church. This gave us many opportunities to evangelize their par-

ents. In 2009, we started a house fellowship in our home, and we still meet there every Wednesday. Please pray that in the coming years God will help us to reach many people with the Gos-

pel and establish churches throughout our surrounding villages.

*\*For security reasons, a pen name is used for this missionary.*



## GHENDI L.

### NORTH INDIA

#### Church Planter

*Ghendi L. works in evangelism and church planting in the northern hills of India. Through his ministry, the Lord has raised up a group of believers who are now meeting together for worship. Ghendi is married and has five children.*

I was a truck driver in the hills of North India, and my life was good. However, I developed a terrible drinking habit. As the addiction became worse, my life became more and more affected by it. Soon, my body demanded the alcohol more than normal food. I became unable to swallow even cooked rice because of the ulcers that had developed as a result of all the alcohol. The only way that I could survive was to mix wheat flour with water and swallow it. I was constantly quarreling with my wife and children, and I made their lives miserable. Eventually, I left my job and spent all my time drinking.

One day, I considered committing suicide by jumping from a cliff near my house in the hills. I thought that I should end my life because I had caused so much damage and had harmed my family so terribly. In addition to all the bad things I had done, my physical health was so poor that I thought there was simply no reason for me to continue living.

On my way to the cliff, I turned on my shortwave radio, and this proved to

be the providence of God. As I listened to the radio, the man who was preaching spoke about the hope and new life that can be found in Christ through the forgiveness of sins. This is the message that the Lord used to save my life, because if I had not heard it at that moment, I would have jumped from the cliff.

A few years later, I came into contact with two men who were Christians. This also was in God's providence, because they were able to explain more things to me. They began to visit me in my home, and they disciplined me. Through these two men, the Lord saved my soul, and now I trust in Christ alone for salvation. I was baptized soon after my conversion. I was the first Christian in my family and even in my town, so I began to witness to everyone. Since then, a few people have responded to the Lord's call, repenting and believing in Christ. I continue in this ministry in the hills near my home, and God has raised up a small group of believers who are now meeting together for worship.







## ULAM C.\*

### NORTH INDIA

#### Church Planter

After the Lord saved him from a very violent life as an unbeliever, Ulam was called to be a minister of the Word. He has served in the ministry since January 2001. He is married and has four children.

I give thanks to the Lord because He saved me. Before I knew God, my life was very sinful, but I never thought that I was too bad. Sometimes I even thought that I was better than other people because, everyone else was doing the same things, and their life looked just as bad as mine. I did not know what sin was. I used to do the same worldly things that everyone else was doing, but there was no peace in my life. My bad heart led me to live a hellish life, and every day I used to quarrel and fight with other people.

In 1996, my family arranged a marriage for me. After my wedding, I began to fight with my wife and abuse her. I even dragged her from the house. This was my daily routine; but despite all of this, my wife still loved me, cared for me, and did all my work in the house. Because of my marriage and all of my other responsibilities, I could no longer continue in my studies, and my financial problems were increasing daily. Also in that time, my wife gave birth to our daughter (which was a blessing from God).

When our daughter was born, my sense of responsibility began to grow, but I still had no source of income. When my daughter was three months old, I left the house and went to another city to learn a trade so that I could provide for my family. This took about six months, and eventually I was able to begin making money. One day, I received news that my wife had fought with my parents and left my home. This made me very angry, and I decided to go back home to find her. I stayed home for two more years, but then I had to return to the city, where there was more work.

It was when I returned to the city that I heard about Jesus Christ for the

first time; but I did not believe. One day, however, some people invited me to a prayer meeting in their house. I observed the prayer, and I realized that there was something about it that I really liked. After this, on December 31, 1999, my older brother invited me to go to a night service at a church and listen to a sermon. It was through this message that God spoke to me and convicted me of my sin. I spoke to the leaders of the church about my problems, and the pastor prayed for me. That day, I trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior, and I believed the promise of Isaiah 41:10:

*"Do not fear, for I am with you;  
Do not anxiously look about you,  
for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, surely I will  
help you,  
Surely I will uphold you with My  
righteous right hand."*

From that moment on, I began attending the fellowship meetings at this church. As I began to grow in the grace of God, I started to recognize a calling on my life for the ministry. I was able to study in a Bible training institute at a local church in one of the cities of North India. While I was at this institute, my faith was greatly strengthened and I was encouraged by what I saw the Lord doing. On January 2, 2001, I began to serve full-time in the ministry. When I look at my life now compared to what it was before, I see that it is completely different. My family, which was once very broken, has been healed, and my wife and children now serve alongside me in the ministry.

*\*For security reasons, a pen name is used for this missionary.*

# Into the Family of God

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

### MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: MATT G.

## ELIS PRAMONO

### UNDISCLOSED COUNTRY Evangelist

*Elis is a gifted evangelist and a woman of prayer. She and her ministry partner, Sari Saat, have seen the Lord bring many Muslims to faith in Jesus Christ.*

I owe my salvation to the influence of a man whom I met on public transportation. His name is Mr. Rumbu. He was sixty-five years old and looked so sick that I thought that he was going to the hospital. I was thirty at the time. Because I felt bad for him, I gave him my seat. When he thanked me, I felt something noticeably different about him. He seemed very kind.

He asked me where I was going, and I began to share with him something of my troubles. I told him that my father had just died and that my mother was working to support our family. I also told him that I too was working dawn to dusk, so that I could help my mother. When I finished, he said to me, "If you have life, you also have a purpose. Therefore, you must not waste your time, but count your days with wisdom."

When Mr. Rumbu left the train, he handed me his business card and told me that he had a newspaper agency. He also told me that although he could not pay me much, he wanted to help me.

A long time passed, and I forgot about Mr. Rumbu. Then one day, I remembered the words that he spoke to me: "Don't waste your life...life must have a purpose...count your days."

His words troubled and intrigued me. I decided to search for his house. When I arrived at the address on the business card he had given me, I saw that Mr. Rumbu's house was very ugly and plain. I walked in front of the house and was hesitant to enter because I could not believe that such a man would live in such an ugly house. I thought to myself, "He spoke to me so intelligently, and yet he lives here?" Finally, I spoke to a neighbor, and he affirmed that it was Mr. Rumbu's residence.

When I entered the house, I immediately saw a cross on the wall and knew that Mr. Rumbu was a Christian. I was hesitant and fearful to go into the house because it was *haram* – unclean for a Muslim to enter.

I first stepped into the house with my left foot. When I sat in the chair, I only sat on the very edge of the seat, because the chair was also unclean for a Muslim. Seeing my uneasiness, Mr. Rumbu said to a small boy who was helping him, "Ari, please clean the chair. The lady does not want to sit in a dirty chair."

As I sat there, Mr. Rumbu began to speak about his life and a little about how Jesus had helped him. I was very attracted to the story he was telling me and wanted to learn more. However, when he gave me a glass of water, I did not want to drink it, because it was "Christian" water and, therefore, unclean.

Mr. Rumbu was not offended; he continued to speak about the Kingdom of Heaven from the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew. I did not understand, but I was attracted to his words and felt a joy in my heart. Mr. Rumbu paused once during his discourse and



told the little boy, "Ari, the lady does not want to drink from this glass. Bring her mineral water in a bottle from the factory." After I received the water, I began to relax and listen more intently to the story about Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. In the afternoon, I left Mr. Rumbu's house. As I was leaving, he again mentioned the newspaper job.

For two weeks following my visit, I could not forget what Mr. Rumbu had told me about counting my days and the Kingdom of God. I wanted to know more about the truth of God and His kingdom, so I decided to work for Mr. Rumbu's newspaper agency.

As I spent time with Mr. Rumbu, I discovered that he knew a lot about the *Qur'an*; he even used it to tell me about Jesus! I thought to myself, "This man used to be a Muslim, and I will make him a Muslim again." From that moment, I tried to persuade him, but it was no use.

It was at this time that Mr. Rumbu introduced me to a Christian girl named Sari. One day, I went with her to a big outdoor Christian fellowship. The only reason I went was because Sari had a crippled leg, and I did not want her to go alone. At the fellowship, I heard the song, "*Kasih Dari Surga*" ("Love from Heaven"). While I was listening to the words of the song, I felt that Christ touched me and took away my burdens. I was overcome with weakness. I knew that God was calling me.

From that day, I knew that God lived and that Jesus was His Son, but I did not go to church, and I did not know what the Bible was. I thought it was only a storybook. I often watched Mr. Rumbu reading the Bible and writing things down on a piece of paper. I thought that it was very strange to write down stories on a piece of paper. One day, after Mr. Rumbu finished reading his Bible, he dropped a piece

of paper on the floor. Later, when I was cleaning his office, I picked up the paper and read the following words from John 14:6:

*"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"*

Afterwards, I took the paper to Mr. Rumbu and asked him, "What is this? Is this a story? What did Jesus mean when He said, 'If you do not know me, you will not be able to get to the Father'?" When Mr. Rumbu told me that Jesus was the Way of Life, I was very drawn to the words. I told him that I wanted to learn more, but that I did not want to become a Christian.

His struggle with diabetes made Mr. Rumbu a sickly man. Because of this, I often felt sad for him, and I decided one day to take him to church. However, I told him that

I would wait outside and not come in. In spite of this, Mr. Rumbu begged me to sit with him. He promised me that I would not have to sing or pray, but only to listen. Finally, I agreed and came into the building. After the singing, the preacher spoke on John 14:6. It was the same verse that I had read on Mr. Rumbu's paper. Then I knew that God was near and had touched my heart again. I wanted to become a Christian.

That night, I returned to my home, but I told no one where I had gone. When my parents went to bed, I went upstairs and prayed. However, this time, I did not pray for the sake of ritual; I prayed as a Christian.

Later, I told my friend Sari that I wanted to go to church but was afraid of my Muslim family. Sari told me to only tell them that I was going out to meet a friend, but I told her that the Christian faith says that we should not lie. Sari replied, "But we are friends, and you are coming with me." From that moment on, Sari and I became

**"Your father has died already! If you convert, your dead father will be tortured in the afterlife because of you!"**

close friends, and we went to church together often.

For nine months, I believed in Jesus, without my family's knowledge; however, in one night, everything changed. I left the house to prepare Mr. Rumbu's house for his birthday party the next day. When I left my house, I forgot to clean up my room, and my Bible was discovered! When I returned home, my mother asked me if I had become a Christian. I told her that I had not, but she tore my Bible and threw it in my face. She screamed at me,

*"Your father has died already! If you convert, your dead father will be tortured in the afterlife because of you!"*

After this, I was not allowed to go outside, because my family wanted to keep me from the church. However, my friends encouraged me through the telephone. Once, while I was washing my clothes, my friend called, and my sister answered. After the call, my sister was extremely angry with me. She took the wet clothes out of the bin and beat me with them.

My family then told me that they would not even give me food or water until I became a Muslim again. They also told me that I would no longer be in their family. I was cut off from my friends. I was no longer able to talk with Mr. Rumbu or Sari.

The workers at the newspaper agency discovered the truth about my condition and told Mr. Rumbu about my suffering. To help me, he began sending newspapers to my door with money hidden inside. I would wake up very early every morning and wait at the door for the newspaper. Then I would take the money out and use it to buy a little food (in my country, it is customary for food vendors to come to the doors of the homes). A little girl that worked in our home was also very kind to me. She took great risks to relay messages between Mr. Rumbu and me. However, this blessing lasted for only a week, for my family discovered

what was happening and became very angry. They questioned me about the source of my money. Then they found the food that I had purchased and smashed it into the floor with their feet. I was then locked inside my room and could not even move about in my own house. When I was locked in my room, I prayed to God, "Jesus, I know that you live. Even though I do not eat or drink, you will give me power to live."

My physical condition continued to grow worse, and I became very weak. One day, my family planned a big party, and strangely I was invited. I was told to wash all the dishes from the party, but I was not permitted to eat or drink anything.

While I was washing the dishes, my sister approached me. She gave me a small sum of money and whispered to me, "Elis, you must go away right now and tell no one where you go...I cannot see you being tortured anymore...you must go now." She then warned me again to keep away, or else my family would chain me up in my room and kill me. My family wanted me to die and had even made plans to kill me after the party! I was very weak and frightened, but I took the money and fled for my life to a nearby city. When I arrived, I contacted Mr. Rumbu and my sister who had helped me.

After I escaped, my family blamed Mr. Rumbu for everything. They even sent my uncle, who was a soldier, to terrorize him. He told Mr. Rumbu that he wanted me back "dead or alive." He also went to the courts and accused Mr. Rumbu of converting a Muslim. He denounced Mr. Rumbu, saying, "Elis is a Christian because of him!"

After some time, I learned that my mother had suffered a stroke. I felt that I had to then contact my family; when I did, they discovered where I was hiding. Upon finding me, my uncle wanted to persecute me, but my sister demanded that I be brought back to the house in order to take care of my mother. No matter what, there is a bond between a mother and a daughter. Therefore, I could not in good conscience leave my mother without help.



I had to risk it all and return home to aid her.

Even though I was once again not allowed to eat or drink except in secret, I stayed with my mother and helped her. One day, while I was feeding her, she began to throw up in bed. I had been at home for one month and had hardly eaten. So when my mother threw up, I knelt on the floor and prayed, "God, bless this food and use it to nourish my body and give me energy." I ate the vomit off the plate and the floor.

At that moment, my sister came in and saw me eating the vomit off the floor. She became very angry and kicked the plate into my face. Then she pulled my hair and beat me in front of my mother. She screamed at me, "Do you want to eat this? Then eat it!" She pushed my face into the plate to make me eat the rest of the vomit. As this was happening, my mother had another stroke.

My mother was taken to the hospital, but she progressively grew worse every day. I went to the hospital to help her, but it was very sad. Blood was coming from her ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. I prayed over my mother and spoke into her ear:

*"I know you think that I have done wrong by following Christ, but it is not a wrong thing. I have to follow Christ. He is my God in whom I trust."*

My sister, who was close enough to hear my words, grabbed me by the back of the hair and pulled me backwards. After this, I was no longer allowed to come into the hospital.

After I had returned home, I prayed to God: "God, please save my mother. If You want her to die, please take her, but I long for her to know You before she dies." At this same time, in the hospital, my mother woke up and was able to speak again. She told my relatives, "Call Elis...I want to talk to Elis." So they brought me to her room, and I was able to pray with my mother. I prayed with my mother in a whisper while my sisters and brothers watched. They mocked me openly while I was praying. Immediately after my prayer, my mother struggled to speak, but she was too weak. She died and I was kicked out of the hospital room. Having been renounced by my family, I went to live with Sari.

Even though my family has rejected me for so long, I know that I have a family of God that lives everywhere. God has helped me. I lost one family, but He gave me many families in its stead. In many places, I have numerous Christian families who love me and take care of me. I can do nothing but thank my God.

*Note: For security reasons a pen name is used for this missionary.*

# From Death to Life

# EURASIA

## MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: HOLDEN BARRY



### ALEXANDER B.

**BELARUS - Pastor**

*Alexander is the pastor of a Baptist church in Belarus. Due to security issues, we cannot give specific names of the places in which he is working. HeartCry began supporting Alexander in 2012.*

I came to faith in the Lord in 1977, when I was 23 years old. I never imagined before that I would become a believer, even though I thought sometimes about how wonderfully everything was made and who the Creator of all things really was.

After my required term in the military was completed, I decided to stay in Blagoveschensk, the same town where I had been serving. The town was located in the Far East of Siberia, on the border with China, and it was very far from home. I attended intensive courses at the trade school and became an assistant to the drill rig master. In time, I was sent north to the town of Tynda, where a railroad was being constructed. I spent the severely cold winter there. I wrote letters home saying that I was really far away and would not come back for another two years.

However, God had different plans for my life. I returned home early as a result of the prayers of my grandmother and various circumstances at my job. My grandmother had urged me to return home because she was concerned for my soul, but I had told her that I would not come home for a

very long time. She prayed specifically that God would bring me back before Easter. Soon after, I sustained an injury and needed surgery. I was then sent home, and I arrived just two days before Easter!

God did everything in my life before that point and afterwards so that I would come to Him, even though my thoughts were far from Him at the time. God was calling me rather strongly in different ways to come to Him, but I was deaf and too fascinated with this world. Everyone around me knew me as a brawler and troublemaker. In some cases, I came out badly beaten. In a short period of time, my motorcycle license was taken away. Even now, I recall with terror the way I used to ride on my motorcycles. In all of this, I was seeking a sense of purpose, but I couldn't find it, so my life was not valuable to me. Looking back, I can see how in many situations I was kept by God. It was as if a boundary was set around me that I couldn't cross, even when I desired to do so.

In the fall of 1976, my grandfather passed away. Because of this, I decided to stop going to dances and drinking alcohol for forty days. I re-





*Pastor Alexander and the congregation*

ally loved my grandfather. When my believing relatives heard about my decision, they invited me to come to a church service. Since God had helped me in many things, I decided to “return the favor” to God and attend an evening service with them. While there, I was invited to another fellowship with believers at a different place. I didn’t want to go, but since I promised, I kept my word. I decided I would attend this one last meeting; but after that, I would be done with such things.

At this meeting, one of the sisters presented me with the Gospel. Literature was scarce in those days, and many were copying the Word of God by hand into a notebook. Through the devotion I saw in these people, I began to realize that God must exist, but I didn’t yet have enough guts to start walking in His way.

In the end, after thorough consideration, I came to the conclusion that the truth was in Christ and that I needed to go in His direction. I began to attend the meetings regularly, but

the new birth came a little later. Then, finally, I saw what a great sinner I was and I also saw God’s love. I was weeping and praying with joy. Prayer became a necessity to me. I would often seek a secluded place to pray.

In my life thereafter, I faced many temptations and trials, but God led me and gave me answers to many spiritual questions. After some time, I left the Pentecostal church that I was attending and joined a Baptist church in a small Belarusian town fifty kilometers from where I lived. Later, the pastor of that church decided to relocate, and there was a need for someone to take his place. After prayer and consideration, the church chose me as the new pastor. I was ordained in 1989. We acquired a house in 1995, where our services are now conducted, and about the same time, my family and I moved to the town to continue in the work of the Lord. All this time was marked with difficulties and conflicts that we had to pass through. However, by God’s grace, we continue to serve Him.



*Minsk, the capital of Belarus*

# GENNADY MIKHAILOV

IRKUTSK, SIBERIA - Church Planter / Pastor



*Gennady Mikhailov lives and ministers in the Irkutsk region of Siberia. Together with other pastors in the region, Gennady is diligent in evangelism and church planting among the many surrounding villages and cities. He is also the pastor of a wonderful church in the city of Irkutsk. HeartCry began supporting Gennady in April of 2012.*

I was born into a family of unbelievers, where Russian Orthodox traditions and holidays were observed, but where God was never worshiped in a way that the Scriptures dictate. God started speaking to me first in 1986. I started a new job in a place where there was one believer working. This gave me the opportunity to become more familiar with the teaching of the Bible. I began to read some spiritual literature, along with the New Testament, and I was asking a lot of questions to believers with whom I came in contact. I was interested in talking about God and everything related to Him. Occasionally, I would visit a Baptist church in Irkutsk.

Despite this new-found interest in knowing about God, I did not truly know Him. I continued to lead a godless way of life. I was a guitar player in a rock band and enjoyed the life-style it brought with it. I sinned and drew pleasure from it even though I had a clear understanding that such a life is displeasing to God and that I shouldn't live like that. I came very close to divorcing my wife, despite the fact that we already had two children. I was extremely argumentative and prideful. My proud heart was hindering my life and creating many problems, which made things quite miserable.

By God's grace, one night, He intervened in a special way. I remember





that night very distinctly: I returned home from another rock band rehearsal. I was drunk, and I had a big argument with my wife. I locked myself away from her in the kitchen and had my dinner alone. On the wall in front of me was a small calendar with Bible verses and short commentaries for each day. It was a gift from believers. I would often forget to keep the days current for weeks at a time, and I noticed then that the calendar was out of date. I got up from the table to remove some of the old pages, but a verse from Isaiah 48:18 caught my eye: "Oh, that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea." God spoke to me through this verse. I read the text over and over again, and it would always resonate somewhere in my mind. It wasn't an audible voice, but rather, somewhere inside. I understood then that it was God calling me, and for the first time in my life, I knelt down and asked God to change my life and my heart. He broke me of my desire for sin and brought me to repentance before Him.

I woke up the next morning with a headache because of the alcohol, but I distinctly remembered the night before

and my prayer. Moreover, I immediately noticed that there was a change inside me. The voice of my conscience became much louder. I could no longer tolerate the very things I could do and say the day before. I somehow instantly stopped cursing. I reconciled with my wife and began eagerly waiting for Sunday to come so that I could go to meet with other believers. My life began to change radically. I left the band and abandoned the music career. I am now a completely different man!

I was baptized in 1990 and became a member of a church in Irkutsk. God continued to work in me, and in 1998, I was ordained to be a deacon in that church. By that time, I was already preaching from the pulpit occasionally and participating in missionary trips and evangelism throughout Siberia and the Irkutsk region.

In 2000, I graduated from Bible school, and our church started a new church plant in a different part of the city. I was involved with this church from the very beginning, and I was appointed pastor in 2004. Looking back on my past life, I am grateful to God for the way that He led me. I am thankful for all the joys and griefs, successes and failures. I am now filled with a desire to serve our Lord with all my heart.



# The Living Word of God

## EASTERNEUROPE

### MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: DON CURRIN



## ION GIREADA

UKRAINE - Church Planter

*Ion pastors two churches (one in Tereblecea and the other in Bahrinesti), coordinates conferences, and trains disciples. As a gifted preacher and teacher, Ion has had a great influence among the Romanian-speaking pastors and missionaries in Ukraine. He directs the church-planting ministry in both the Transcarpatia and Odessa regions, is the President of Nehemiah Missionary Society, and serves as a teacher in the Theological College in Cernauti. His wife's name is Lena.*

**M**y name is Ion Gireada, and I was born on June 26, 1968, in the village of Tereblecea, Chernovtsy, Ukraine. My parents attended a Pentecostal church when I was born, but moved to a Baptist one later. My mother came from an Orthodox family, but she repented and became an Evangelical Christian. My father was born into a Pentecostal family, and after he was baptized, he married my mother and lived in Tereblecea. There was no Evangelical church there, so they had to go to church in Stanesti, about four miles away.

My parents had six children: four sons and two daughters. I was their fifth child. My parents took me to church since I was little, even though we were living under communism, and it was forbidden to take your children to church. As I was growing up, I became disobedient to my parents and to the Lord. When I was in middle school, I did not want to go to church anymore. I did not have a Bible and had never read the Gospel. I gathered with some friends of mine, and we formed a gang. We used to steal from people during the night, mock people, and do many other bad things. We also started stealing from the stores, but we would only take small things. One night, however, the gang decided to steal some audio electronics, and I was supposed to go with them. But God prevented me from going that night. The next day, the police caught them. They went to trial and received two years in jail. I understood that God was the One who prevented me from going to jail.

I started going to church again with my parents, and my father brought home a Bible from Romania and gave it to me. The problem was that I could not read in Romanian, because I studied at a school that used the Cyrillic alphabet. I started learning the Romanian alphabet, and after only one year, I could already read in Romanian.

In the summer of 1986, the Lord touched my heart. On the Sunday of July 20th, I stepped forward and accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. I gave up my old friends and started going to church regularly. I would walk several miles to get to church and the



youth meetings. My old friends started mocking me, saying that I was crazy and that I had ruined my life. However, the Lord strengthened me, and I was baptized on November 2nd in the Ukrainian church in Chernovtsy.

One month later, I had to go into the army in Moscow, and that is where my hardest trials began. The communists tried to convince us that there was no God, and they threatened us with all kinds of things. They would tell us that we would be sent to the white bears in Siberia if we did not deny Christ. They let the sergeants mock and beat us. During that time, God was so close to me that I felt no pain, and I was able to stay faithful to Christ. God also helped me preach the Gospel to other soldiers and officers.

Many Orthodox people from Armenia, when they saw our faith, joined us and came to pray with us. Then, many Muslims from Cecenia became our friends because they were impressed by our character and perseverance in the faith. God worked in a wonderful way, and after four months of trials, all the Christians received the best duties. We were also allowed to go to the Baptist church in Moscow on Sunday. All the officers asked us to bring them Bibles and to explain to them some things from the Scripture. I could see that God was with me every step of my spiritual journey.

But when things started going well, I forgot about the Lord and His miracles. I did not read the Bible anymore and stopped going to church. But God disciplines the people He loves in order to help them repent. I had my own room and did not have to sleep where the other soldiers were sleeping. I could do whatever I wanted and sleep as much as I wanted. One night, I could not sleep because a fly was bothering me. I was very frustrated, and I wanted to kill it. I did not notice that there was a nail in the wall, so when I tried to hit the fly with my right hand, I ended up hitting the nail instead. I fell down and lost consciousness. When I woke up, I felt a severe pain in my hand and saw a lot

of blood. I went to get some help, but I lost consciousness again. Eventually, I was taken to the hospital, where I had three surgeries. I spent two months in the hospital. I still have a piece of that nail in my right hand, and it serves as a reminder to me of my disobedience to the Lord. I had many other accidents like this, but I could see God's love and the fact that He had a plan for me.

After the my time in the military, I remained in the city and started to work as a bus driver. At the same time, I tried to know the Lord better and did all kinds of Bible studies. I had a thirst to study the Bible and wanted to go to a Bible School abroad. In 1989, I was elected as a youth leader in the Romanian church in Chernovtsy, and I also shared the Gospel with the people in my home village of Tereblecea. We organized an evangelistic event that was attended by about fifty non-Christians. We only had three Romanian Bibles and two New Testaments in Russian. The people rushed to get them!

The next day I was called by the police and threatened for giving out religious propaganda. When they gave me a fine, I told them that I did not have the money to pay it, but that I would not eat for a month in order to satisfy the debt. I also told them that they were fighting against God. When they heard this, they got scared and said that I did not have to pay the fine, but that I still had to stop doing religious propaganda. Despite their threats, I continued having evangelistic events in other places as well, and the police came every time until God brought freedom to our country when communism fell.

On June 29th, 1991, I was married to Lena Zgircia. After a few months, I found out that there was a mission school in Vatra Dornei, Romania, and I went there to study. Six months later, I came back home in order to share the Gospel in Tereblecea together with my wife. We used to walk from Chernovtsy to Tereblecea every Sunday, about fourteen miles in all.

Finally, with the help of several Christians from abroad, we managed

to buy an old house. We also bought a tent, put it beside the house, and started meeting in it. A church from Switzerland started supporting us as missionaries, and they did so for several years. When they could no longer help us, the Lord sent Sorin Prodan to our home, and he invited us to become HeartCry missionaries.

In 1994, I went to the Baptist Seminary in Bucharest together with a few other brothers. We were admitted to the distance-learning program, even though we did not speak Romanian very well. While I was a student, I continued to go to Tereblecea because we were often persecuted by the Orthodox Church. In spite of this, many people repented, and in 1999, I graduated from seminary and was ordained as a pastor. We also continued the mission

work in the surrounding villages, such as Bahranești.

With the help of brothers in Romania, we started the ministry in Puieni, where Sandu and Martha Deac came to help. Eventually, we ordained a pastor for that church. He is a brother from Tereblecea who graduated from the Bible College in Chernovtsy. Another village where we started the ministry is Poleana. There we also have a chapel and a brother who works as a missionary.

By God's help, I serve as a pastor in Tereblecea and Bahranești, and I also coordinate the missionary team in Ukraine. Since 2002, I have served as the president of Nehemiah Mission in three regions of Ukraine. I pray that the Lord will bring a spiritual revival in other Romanian villages in Ukraine.



## FLORIN STAN

### ROMANIA - Church Planter

*Florin is the pastor of the church in Fieni, Romania, where he is also the leader of a church-planting team. In addition, he develops mission projects in five areas where HeartCry is planting churches. Florin and his wife Mariana have one daughter.*

**M**y name is Florin Stan. I am married and have an eight-year-old daughter. I work as a HeartCry missionary in Fieni, Dambovită County, where I am planting a church.

I became a Christian in 1995, when I was seventeen years old. I was born in an Orthodox family, and I had no attraction toward God or religion until the year that I was converted. Before that, I thought I was a good person and that

I was fine in the sight of God because I had not killed anyone, stolen anything, or committed adultery. This is how I used to justify myself before God.

When I was twelve years old, I dreamed one night that the devil came to take me with him because of my swearing, but he left my sister alone because she didn't swear. I understood that God was warning me that if I kept swearing, the devil would take me with him. I was very afraid, and I tried not to swear anymore, but I forgot about the dream after a while.

During my teenage life, I almost drowned twice, but the Lord had mercy on me, and I was saved. Also, a friend of mine died while he was sleeping, due to a gas leak. I was very affected by these events, and looking back, I realize that God, who had chosen me for salvation, had already started working in my heart.

When I was seventeen years old, on Palm Sunday, my friends and I gathered at one of their houses. We were drinking and watching movies. After watching two movies, the host put on one about the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Within the first half-hour, my friends had all left. I was surprised that they left, because on Sundays, we always



drank and watched movies the entire day. Even though my friends had gone, I decided to stay and watch the movie to the end. I had a strange feeling about God that I had never had before. I could feel God's sadness because my friends did not want to watch the movie about the life of Jesus. I was sure that they would have stayed to watch a different movie. I told God in my soul that I wanted to be faithful to Him.

I started reading the Bible that year, and I saw the truth. First, I became aware of my sinfulness and felt convicted. The Sermon on the Mount accused me strongly, and I realized I was a terrible sinner. Then I discovered that the Orthodox Church did not preach the truth, but only human traditions that are not pleasing to God. The Lord was working in my heart, and I searched for a church that believed what I had begun to believe. I started going to the Evangelical church in Bela, and there I turned to God. My life was completely changed. I gave up a life of sin, cigarettes, alcohol, dirty words, disco, and the company of my sinful friends. People that used to know me said that I was not the same Florin they knew. I was an entirely different person. I had been born again, and I was a new creation in Christ. I truly loved the Lord Jesus. My greatest pleasure was telling everybody about Him, His sacrifice, and His plan.

I suffered much persecution for the sake of Christ from my family, relatives, friends, and colleagues; but the Lord strengthened me in all of this. In the Evangelical church where I was baptized, I learned a lot about the Christian faith. I was also involved in the ministry, and this responsibility helped me to grow up spiritually. Eventually, I began to sense God's calling to a more profound ministry. I was working in the industrial field, and I did not have much time left for preaching the Gospel. I prayed about what I should do, and

**I thought I was  
a good person...  
in the sight of  
God because I had  
not killed anyone,  
stolen anything, or  
committed adultery.**

the Lord showed me that I should plant a Baptist church in Pucioasa. In 2001, I was accepted as a HeartCry missionary. In 2009, after planting the church in Pucioasa, I moved to Fieni in order to start a new church there.

At the beginning, I tried to meet new people and share the Gospel with them. Several persons turned to God and were baptized this way. New people were added to our group. Some of them moved away, and some gave up the faith. It was difficult for us as a church every time someone left, but I am thankful to God for supporting the ministry.

We have two purposes in our ministry: the evangelization of the lost and the maturing of believers. We go on the street and give out Bibles and brochures two days a week. Through this, we meet new people, and some of them turn to God. We also give out Christian materials in Fieni and twelve other villages in the surrounding area, and we disperse fliers with our church name and address included, so that people will know how to get in touch with us. We are also working to have a good church website, so that people can contact us even through the Internet. Another evangelistic method we have involves organizing special events in the church and inviting new people to our fellowship. When someone is converted, we seek to help them grow spiritually through personal discussions with other believers and Bible studies. My desire is that the entire church will be involved in the ministry according to the spiritual gifts that the people have received from the Lord, for the Bible says that the body of Christ grows through the work of each member.

I am thankful to God for the grace that He has given us. My desire is to take every opportunity to work together with the Lord. One day, I do not want to be sorry that I did not do as much as I could have. Praise be to the Lord!

# Preaching Christ WESTERNEUROPE

## MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: PAUL WASHER



### ANDREA ARTIOLI

#### ITALY - Church Planter

*Andrea Artioli serves as a church planter in Mantova, Italy. He works alongside Giacomo Lerici in the local church and in the ministry of Coram Deo. The vision of Coram Deo is to educate pastors and lay people through the distribution of biblical literature and the sponsoring of Bible conferences throughout Italy. Andrea and his wife Emanuela have three children.*

#### Andrea's Testimony

I was not raised in a Christian family. My parents were divorced when I was eight years old. A few years later, my mother met an Evangelical Christian, and they began to study the Bible together. Soon afterwards, she became a Christian and began to attend the only Evangelical church in our town. She took me with her.

I was eleven years old and attending a youth camp when the Lord opened my eyes. The Gospel message was very simple, but I really felt a deep sense of my sin and the need for forgiveness in my life. Since that time, I have tried to follow Christ fully.

During my teenage years, the Lord used Operation Mobilization's summer campaigns in Italy to help me grow in Christ and to cultivate a passion for the lost and the Great Commission. For five years, I was deeply involved in many evangelistic campaigns throughout Italy.

When I was seventeen years old, it was already clear for me that the Lord was calling me to serve Him in the ministry. Although I did not know how or where I would minister, I knew that I had to be prepared. Therefore, I applied to the London Theological Seminary and attended from 1990 to 1992.

In 1993, I was married to my wife Emanuela. Immediately after our honeymoon, we entered into the ministry by faith. We did not know how we would support ourselves or how we would obtain the funds to translate and publish solid Christian literature for the Italian church. However, the Lord was faithful, and we were able to found the Passaggio Publishing House. It was the first ministry in Italy to publish classic Reformed literature. Over a period of fifteen years, we published fifty new titles in Italian.

In 2007, in association with several churches and pastors from the United States and the United Kingdom, we established the Coram Deo ministry. Our primary purpose is to plant churches in Italy and to publish sound Christian literature. In September of the same year, we also founded Sola Grazia Church (Grace Alone). I am currently pastoring this new church plant and am chairman of Coram Deo.



## Emanuela's Testimony

My parents were saved when I was five years old, and therefore, I was raised in a Christian family. Every week, we attended a Brethren Church that was twenty miles from the village where we lived. I really enjoyed the church, especially the Sunday school. During the summertime, my parents also allowed me to go to Bible camps. They really helped me to better understand the Gospel and my sin.

I did not have a particular time of rebellion towards God or my family, but during my teenage years, I began to question what I had been taught. In spite of this, I continued going to church and sought to find the answers to my questions through reading the Bible. I cannot remember the specific

day, but over a period of time, God began to convict me of my sin and of my need of the Savior. I was often plagued by the fear of not going to heaven, and I frequently asked God to forgive me of my sins, especially before going to sleep. I really wanted to be saved and be sure that I was God's child. For this reason, I kept asking for His mercy and for Him to welcome me into His kingdom.

When I was fourteen years old, the peace of God settled in my mind and heart. I also began to show the fruit of salvation: I had an increasing desire to read God's Word, and I enjoyed fellowship with other Christian friends. I also grew in my prayer life and learned to trust in God for everything that was happening in my young life.



## GIACOMO LERICI

### ITALY - Church Planter

*Giacomo Lericci serves as a church planter in Mantova, Italy. He works alongside Andrea Artioli in the local church and in the ministry of Coram Deo. The vision of Coram Deo is to educate pastors and lay people through the distribution of biblical literature and the sponsoring of Bible conferences throughout Italy.*

My name is Giacomo Lericci, and I am married to my wife, Michela. We have three children: Sefora (20), Gabriele (17), and Miriam (5). I was born again twenty-one years ago. My experience with Christ is a bit special. I

was born in a Christian family that has been Evangelical for three generations. Since I was a child, I have been listening to the preaching of the Bible at home, at church, and at Christian camps.

I grew up with very high moral and ethical standards. When I was seventeen, while listening to some evangelistic messages at a summer camp, I understood that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. So after a few months, I was baptized. In the beginning, it was exciting; but as time passed by, it became harder and harder to live what I thought I believed. When I was eighteen years old, I made an emotional decision to attend a Bible School. Unfortunately, I could not stay longer than six months. I could not accept some of their contradictions and extreme positions; so, in tune with my impetuous nature, I left. However, my time at the Bible School was not entirely wasted, for there I met the girl who would become my wife. After two years, we were married. At that time, she did not know that the boy that she was marrying would prove to be a really difficult person. A year after the mar-

riage, we were already considering separating because of our constant disputes.

At home, I was not the same person that I was trying to be in church. In church, I would sing, pray, and be very polite. At home, I was always nervous, short-tempered, and violent. One day, after a dispute with my wife, my anger led me to the point of destroying the door of our bedroom's wardrobe.

What was wrong with me? I was not consistent, and I could not control my anger. Why? Nobody noticed anything in church, but something was definitely wrong. The only person who realized that there was a problem was Stefano, my older brother. One Saturday evening, he came over for dinner; after our meal, he asked me to do a strange thing: "Giacomo, tonight I would like to pray with you. Let's go out to a quiet place, and let's pray together."

I thought, "What a strange request!" Although it was late and I was tired, I agreed, because I loved my brother.

We got into the car and drove up a hill. We left the car in an open space and began to walk for some meters under a starry sky until we were able to see the whole valley. My brother began to pray, worshiping God and thanking Him for the having the opportunity to be there together with me. Before ending his prayer, he said, "Lord, I pray that You would open my brother's eyes so that he can see himself the way You see him." After his prayer, I felt strange and heavy. For the first time, I was before Christ, aware of

What was wrong with me? I was not consistent, and I could not control my anger. Why?

I need You! I need Your forgiveness! Without it, my life will have no meaning!

My ideas about God, myself, my circumstances, and even my history changed.

my sin. My sin appeared horrible, tremendous, and unbearable to me.

I felt like I was in front of an abyss without any hope. With all the voice that I had, I began to cry out to God: "Lord forgive me! I am a hypocrite! A false picture!

I need You! I need Your forgiveness! Without it, my life will have no meaning! Lord, now I know the reason why Christ died upon the cross. It was because of me! It was because of my sin that Jesus went on that cross. He took my place!" I did shout, but no one could hear me apart from my brother and God. When I finished praying, I felt as light as a feather. It

was as if someone had removed a very heavy sack from my shoulders, a sack I could not carry anymore.

The day after, I was a new person with a new purpose – serving my Lord! My marriage was recovered, as evidenced by the fact that we will celebrate

twenty-two years of marriage this year (2013). I told my church that I had truly been born again the night before; but the people, and even the elders, were dismayed and thought it was only a rededication.

I, however, am convinced that it was a real new birth. The church that I attended had many problems. No one nurtured or disciplined me. No one told me what I should do. So I began to do any kind of service for the Lord that I could. Since this church believed that any man is automatically a potential preacher, after four months, the elders asked me to preach. I said, "How do I do it?" Their answer





was, “Don’t worry. Read a passage from the Scripture and share some thoughts.” This was the situation. I preached, and I have tried to preach from that moment on.

I began to preach more and more. In the first years, I made many mistakes. Having no outside help, I would read the Bible much and pray, asking God to help me understand all that I read. God has been very patient with me. Although I never had the opportunity to attend a good seminary, the Lord prepared His own “Bible school” for me in my family and in our home.

After my daughter Sefora’s birth, our twins Gabriele and Giosué arrived. The whole pregnancy seemed to go well, but the delivery turned into a tragedy. Giosué died after two days due to a pulmonary hemorrhage, and Gabriele spent five months in the hospital, wavering between life and death almost every day.

Today, Gabriele is a disabled quadriplegic. He cannot hear, does not speak or understand, and he cannot feed himself or walk. But he is a happy kid. God gave us the strength to carry on and understand that Gabriele was not a faulty gift, but a good

gift, because God does not give faulty gifts. This great discovery helped me to overcome this tragedy and understand the truth that Gabriele was a gift of God.

We moved to Mantova because Gabriele needed a special school for the disabled. In this town, we were near my coworker and best friend Andrea Artioli. Through him, I discovered the amazing doctrine of God’s sovereignty.

Andrea’s work of translating good authors from English to Italian gave me the opportunity to read Martin Lloyd-Jones, John Piper, John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, etc. My mind was opened, and I began to understand the doctrines of grace more deeply. It was certainly a hard struggle for my pride and my presumption. But God won and showed me His sovereignty in a way that left me overwhelmed.

My ideas about God, myself, my circumstances, and even my history changed. My preaching changed. We came to Mantova, thinking that God wanted to use us to do good to Gabriele by letting him attend a school that was suitable for him. But we understand now that God was using Gabriele to do us good and to let us comprehend more about Him.

Ten years ago, God gave me the opportunity to attend a seminar (on expository preaching) that was connected to the Master Theological Seminary. I bless God for this opportunity. God’s grace has no measure. After twenty years of burning desire to serve Him full-time, He has provided in a surprising and miraculous way the financial support I need.

Now, I have been preaching for twenty years. When I look back, I can see the positive effects of my preaching on other people, and I say, “How can it be possible that God used and still uses a person like me?” My answer is that God is so sovereign that He can use the least of things for the advancement of His kingdom! To Him be the honor and all the glory!



Freed from Sin

# LATIN AMERICA

## MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: LUKE NASH

### URBANO GOMEZ

PACAIPAMPA, PERU

Evangelist / Teacher

*Urbano is serving as a missionary within the association of churches in the region of Pacaipampa, Peru. He travels, teaches, and helps in the development of new church plants.*

**W**hen I was 12 years old, I lost my father in an accident, and when I was 13 years old, I lost my mother to cancer. My childhood was difficult and full of suffering. I had one older brother, but he was not really interested in my life. I worked hard to educate myself, but when I was a little older I got together with a bad group of friends that led me to live a shattered lifestyle filled with bad habits and all kinds of sin. I even reached the point of attempting to take my own life several times, thinking that it was the only way to escape. But my God set me free.

In 1984, I met Graciela, and we were married. At that time, the Gospel had only recently reached the towns nearby, and a man named Angel used to disturb the town with teachings that were different from those in which our ancestors had raised us. He was so insistent with his teachings that eventually the first church was created in the very small village of Pechuquis. The struggle was strong every day between the Roman Catholics and the Evangelicals. Since I was not a Christian, I helped to put traps before the Evangelicals and caused many to fall.

One day, my wife went to the church to listen to the Evangelicals,

and she continued to attend for about four consecutive Sundays. Attacks soon came from my brother and my relatives, who told me that if I allowed my wife to continue to go there, the pastor was going to take her from me. They told me that in all the Christian churches, the men gave their wives to the pastor so that he could use them. I did not respond to them, but I decided that it would be best to go and investigate for myself.

On the morning of October 23, 1984, I told my wife that I wanted to go to the church with her. My wife was very happy, and she went to pick out my clothes. However, before we left, I arranged a pistol and a knife in my saddlebag without my wife realizing it. I told myself, "He has deceived others, but he will not deceive me. If this is true, I will take justice into my own hands, and I will make him an example to the rest." When we arrived at the church, the pastor, as well as all of the other brothers and sisters, treated me very kindly. The service began in an orderly fashion. The women were on one side, and the men were on the other. When the prayer began, I was alert, looking for any sign of the things that had been told me from those outside the church. I did not see anything indecent that matched the things I had heard.

The message was preached, and at the end, the pastor gave a call for repentance in the name of Jesus Christ. Without knowing what I was doing, I went up front. The pastor explained the Gospel to me, and I believed in the Lord Jesus.

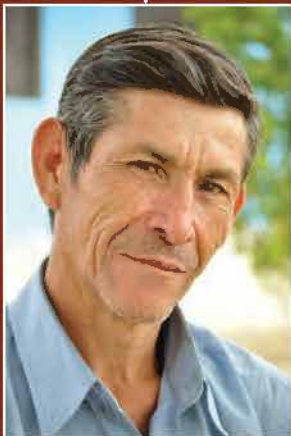
I felt peace that day, and I knew that the Lord had made me a new man



through His Spirit and by His grace. My life underwent a transformation, and I became apt for service. I later began to spend a lot of time reading the Bible and praying. I attended the church services with my wife, so that we could be in fellowship with the brothers and sisters and come to understand more of the Scriptures.

The church was still very new, so the pastor organized evangelistic events in which he would go house to house to visit with the villagers. I always enjoyed going with him to share the Gospel of Jesus with people. The pastor began to disciple and teach me through personal studies. Later, the church appointed me to be a deacon and a co-laborer with the pastor; but because of my wife's poor health, we had to move to the region of Pacaipampa.

We arrived at the church in Pacaipampa in 1994. After some time congregating there with my family and helping in evangelism, the church appointed me as a teacher for the youth. When working with the youth, I organized evangelism events in which we went house to house in places where the Gospel had never reached. Eventually, I was asked to teach



Sunday school for the adults. The church continued to grow and so did the need for men who were prepared to teach and pastor. The pastor of the church was getting older, and it became necessary for someone to replace him. I was hoping and praying that the church would appoint me to lead the church, but there was another capable brother, and the church ultimately decided to elect him as their pastor.

At that time, I really desired to be pastor, and I did not understand why the church had not chosen me; but I came to realize that it was because the Lord had another ministry in which I was to serve. There are forty Evangelical churches in our region, and I now serve in this association of churches as a missionary for the entire district. Within the district, some churches are three, six, or even nine hours away and require passing over rivers and mountains. Since pastors here, in addition to shepherding the flock, must work hard in their fields in order to provide for their family, some of the churches were rarely visited. Therefore, there was a need for someone to devote themselves full-time to this ministry.



I now travel to visit the believers spread throughout the district and to teach in the churches. The Lord has blessed me greatly with good health, a precious faith, and an understanding wife who supports me

through the good and the bad. My work now involves helping with the new church plants throughout the region, organizing evangelistic events, and teaching theology in different churches in the association.



## DARIO SARA

LIMA, PERU - Pastor

*Dario is pastoring New Life Baptist Church in the district of Oasis de Villa in the southern area of Lima.*

I had the opportunity to attend a Baptist church as a child with my aunt and uncle, but when my parents and I moved, I no longer attended church and was not concerned about my salvation.

Throughout my youth, I sporadically attended youth group meetings, but I showed no signs of conversion. When I was nineteen, I was invited to attend a church anniversary close to my house. Looking back, it is incredible that I continued attending, because at first, none of the other youth wanted to greet me or talk with me. This was due to my bad reputation.

After six months, some of the other youth began to greet me, sit with me, and invite me to whatever event they were having. I couldn't believe it. It made me so happy. I had already given up partying with my friends, and I had gone six months without drinking or smoking. I am not sure how, but during this time, it was as if I were invisible to my worldly friends. One day, they asked me where I had been for so long. This question gave me pause, and after thinking about it for a few minutes, I concluded that I was a

Christian. None of my friends understood this response, but I did.

With my profession of faith came many problems. Some of my friends reproached me, some made fun of me, and others became bitter toward me. Even my father was angry with me. My friends continued to pursue me and to try to entice me to sin with them, and on one occasion, I fell into sin. However, the fall was very painful, and I felt miserable. This brokenness was even further evidence that I was no longer the same. God had worked a miracle in my life without my knowing it.

I became the black sheep of my family, since I was the only Evangelical. This went on for about two years of my life, and for personal reasons, I ended up moving to San Sebastian in the state of Cusco. Once I arrived there, I immediately began attending a Baptist church. It was in San Sebastian, in August of 1989, that I realized that I needed to be baptized. I then spent some time working in each of the ministries of the church – Sunday School, youth group, and evangelism.

Due to the growing membership of the congregation and because of several other missions that had been started by the believers there, the church decided to search for a co-pastor to help with the workload. At this point, an older man from the congregation posed this question to the church: "Why are we going to look for a co-pastor from outside when we have a brother right here in the church who does all of the things that we would have a co-pastor to do? Why don't we just recognize this brother as the co-pastor?" That is how my life in the ministry began.

After this, I was elected secretary of the Association of Pastors of the Inca Region. At a family camp (affili-





ated with the association), I was involved in an accident – I was electrocuted by touching a power line. I had to go to Lima for rehabilitation, and while there, I began attending Maranatha Baptist Church. I stayed at this church for five years; during that time, I also married my wife.

While at Maranatha Baptist Church, I served the Lord in several different areas of the ministry, even serving as deacon for several years. During this time, I also maintained a secular job, and God provided for all of our needs. Throughout these years, I never lost touch with my pastor from Cusco, and whenever he came to Lima, he would come by my house and visit. We would talk about our children in the faith (who today are pastors and missionaries) and about the “good old days” when I was in the ministry. It was through these visits that I came to realize that there was an emptiness in my life. I began to see that my love for God had grown cold and that I had come to love money and to care about providing a home and nice things for my wife and my daughters more than serving the Lord.

One day, my pastor from Cusco arrived with a pastor from Lima. We talked a while about the work, and then they left. After about a year, they both returned, and they asked me if I would like to take over as pastor of a work in Oasis de Villa (in the city of Lima). I was so happy to hear this

question! The pastor from Lima told me that he had been praying for me for a year, and I told him to simply let me know when I would get started; I did not even need to give it a second thought. However, it then occurred to me that I needed to speak about this with my wife and with my pastor. So after the brothers left, I shared with my wife what the brothers had told me. She told me that she had been praying for the Lord to give me a better job, and she considered this to be the Lord’s answer to her prayer. She asked me when we could get started. I told her that I still needed to speak with our pastor.

My pastor encouraged me not to make a hasty decision. He told me that I should pray. At about this same time, my brother offered me a job that had an incredible salary. I shared this with my wife, and she told me that God had already answered our prayers and that she did not feel like God wanted me to accept the job with my brother. I then called the pastor from Lima who had spoken with me about the pastorate in Oasis, and I shared with him about my desire to take over the work there. That is the story of how I came to be the pastor of the church “Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida of Oasis de Villa” beginning in May of 2006.

# Bold Witnesses for Christ

## MIDDLE EAST

### MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES

COORDINATOR: MARC GLASS

## DR. ANDREW

UNDISCLOSED COUNTRY - Evangelist / Church Planter

*Dr. Andrew is a gifted apologist to Muslims and began his evangelistic work among nomadic Arabs several years ago in the Middle East. After finishing his university studies, Dr. Andrew set up a veterinary clinic in a small village to treat sheep and camels. Dr. Andrew is now leading a team of evangelists who are working among difficult-to-reach Muslims.*

**M**y name is Dr. Andrew. I was born in a Muslim country and raised in a city that was populated with radical Muslims. I lived my life like every other nominal Christian in a country filled with Muslims – quietly and cautiously, being careful not to speak about Christianity. I grew up in a loving home where God was respected but not worshiped. I always knew that God was our Creator, who dwelled far above us in heaven, watching over us to see who was good and who was bad.

While I was still a boy, around the age of twelve, I was invited by a friend to attend an Evangelical church close to our house. I went to check it out because I was curious about this brave church in the middle of a city full of radical Muslims.

Upon entering the church, I felt very welcomed. I watched as the people interacted with such a genuine love among them, even though they were all from different backgrounds and families. Their teaching and way of life intrigued me, so I continued go-

ing on a weekly basis to the church. I wanted to hear more of their instruction and have fellowship with them.

In 1995, the church invited me to attend a conference with them in the north. I was excited to go, and at this conference, my life was changed. During the conference, they showed the “Jesus” film in Arabic. While watching the film, I felt as if I were living in the days of Jesus, and all the stories that I had been taught about Jesus came alive on the screen. They began to transform into more than mere stories; they were becoming a reality to me. The scene that gripped me most while watching the film was seeing Jesus on the cross, and upon His death, the veil of the temple being ripped in two. I continued to think about that scene, wondering what exactly it meant. When the film finished, the pastor started sharing why Jesus had to die and be crucified. He explained the holiness of God and the depths of our sin. At that moment, I felt the weight of my own sin and saw how dirty and unworthy I was to stand before such a holy God. Conviction began stirring in my heart. Then the pastor said this, “Even if you see that there is no hope in yourself, the Lord is telling you that through the blood of His Son on the cross, He has torn the veil that separated you from Him. By confessing Jesus as Lord, you will gain the right to stand before God.” At that precise moment, I felt inexplicable joy and peace being poured into my heart. It was truly a supernatu-



ral moment! That day, I surrendered to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, confessed Jesus as Lord, and devoted my life to Him.

After that time, I had a great thirst for God's Word and began studying the Bible for hours in order to understand and know my Savior. The Lord continued working faithfully in my life, sanctifying me through His Word and His Spirit. Every day I grew in the knowledge of His grace and realized to a greater degree the depths of my sin. I was more and more humbled by the reality of being forgiven and called God's son.

In 1997, in obedience to the Bible, I followed our Lord's example by being baptized. In the same year, I also felt the Lord confirming His call on my life to share the Gospel with Muslims and establish local churches that could disciple newly converted Muslims and train them to advance the Gospel. My heart continued to expand in love for all the Muslims around me as I watched them, day in and day out, devote their lives to a false religion.

As my burden and desire to share the Gospel with Muslims grew stronger, I began studying more deeply in the Bible. I also began to study Islam in order to better understand the religion and its followers. By God's grace, I was able to understand the complex written language of the *Qur'an* as well as the commentaries for the *Qur'an*.

Throughout high school and the university, I sought opportunities to share the truth of Christ and engage with the Muslim people. I began Bible study groups that included a mixture of mature Christians, long-time Muslims, and newly converted Muslims. Many of them had questions and were thirsty to know more about Jesus Christ.

After graduating from college, I began working, and I used my job as a platform to share the Gospel. Soon the government of my country became aware of my evangelistic activities. I received a phone call from an unknown number, and the person introduced himself as the secret police. They wanted to see me. I began pan-

icking, and I called my pastor. He reassured me and said, "Do not be afraid; you are serving the strongest Boss on earth."

I arrived the next day at the office of the secret police. They led me into a room and questioned me for four hours. They asked me a series of questions about my thoughts on Islam, and they wanted to know why I attended an Evangelical church. I told them that I attended the Evangelical church because I did not believe Islam was the religion from God and that I believed that Jesus was the only way to heaven. I was shocked at the boldness that the Lord provided me! Despite my interrogator's disgust and anger to my response, the interview ended with them merely threatening me and stating that I was not to evangelize or say anything against Islam. This visit with the secret police was the first of many to come.

I continued with my ministry, gaining more brothers and sisters with willing hearts to spread the Gospel throughout our country. Again, the secret police visited me while I was at work, placing me in their car and driving off with me. They began looking through my laptop and questioning specific cases when I had shared the Gospel with men. They also wanted to know who was funding me in my work. They drove me to an office to interrogate me once again. They asked me to sign a paper that was full of statements about being a law-abiding citizen, being loyal to my country, and supporting my country. That paper also included one line stating that I would not evangelize Muslims with my Christian beliefs. I told them I agreed with the paper fully and would sign it as soon as they removed that one line. They became furious. They called my brother and father, threatening to kill me if I did not stop evangelizing Muslims. I continued to refuse to sign their paper, and they sent me to one officer after another. Finally, they sent me to their main boss. I again refused to sign the paper, and he also became furious. He shouted, "Don't you know

that I can send you to prison for the rest of your life!" I replied, "I know this, but I cannot sign this paper until you remove that one line." They then led me to a cell three stories underground and locked the door. I sat in the cold, dark silence of my cell, awaiting their next move.

After only fifteen minutes, a man opened the door and took me back to the main boss's office, cursing me along the way. The boss stated, "See, I can put you in jail. Now sign the paper." I responded, "I never doubted that you could send me to jail, as I previously told you, but you can forget

the paper. I will not sign it, and if you want to place me in prison, then do it. However, after I am released, I will go outside our country through multiple social and media networks, and I will proclaim that I have been persecuted for my faith. Through this, many will come to know Christ!" After my statement, I was cursed repeatedly. Then they kicked me out of their building.

That visit was in 2005. In every month afterwards, they continued to confront me with a variety of different visits, phone calls, and threats. Then, the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010 brought an end to my monthly vis-



## WALID B. LEBANON Evangelist / Church Planter

*Walid lives in Lebanon, and his primary ministries are evangelism and discipleship. He is a bold witness for Christ, doing street evangelism and handing out Bibles in the midst of the political, economic, and religious turmoil of the Middle East. Walid is also an invaluable asset in assisting HeartCry with discipling and overseeing other missionaries and church planters in the Middle East.*

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1947. My parents belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church, but they did not go to church or practice their religion. I was raised in a conservative, though not religious, family. Our aim in life was to get educated and gain status and riches. I was sent to an American school in Beirut, but I was a bad student. I flunked elementary school and repeated classes many times. I

reached high school, but I could not make it to college, so my parents sent me to trade school. At the age of twenty, I became a drug addict, which began with cigarettes and marijuana.

After trade school, I went to Saudi Arabia to work. I worked there twelve years, and my drug addiction increased. I met an American girl, and she liked me because I could provide drugs for her. Later, I got involved with a married woman, and her husband found out, so I had to quit my job and leave Saudi. War was stirring in Lebanon, so I moved to the United States with the help of my sister, who already lived there. Initially, I lived in Florida with her, but my addiction intensified. Soon, I even became suicidal. My sister found out, and she kicked me out of her house. Then I moved to California and bought a Mexican restaurant in Santa Ana. In Santa Ana, I became addicted to hard drugs; one day, I even overdosed in a park.

Weeks later, I bought a gun and was waiting for the right time to end my life. At the restaurant, I had a Mexican cook who used to daily read his Bible on his coffee break. One day, I followed him and asked him, "You read this book every day. Haven't you memorized it yet?" He looked at me with a smile and said, "You need Jesus in your life, for if you die today, you will end up in hell." I immediately challenged that thought and told him that I was better than many people. He then explained to me that it didn't matter



its. The secret police rarely interfered anymore with my ministry, because they were preoccupied with too many other things at that time. My last investigation was two months ago (2013). It lasted four hours. I am amazed at how the Lord has always provided me with His perfect peace during these investigations and shown me just what to say in the most trying moments. Truly, He is faithful to His Word!

I praise the Lord for saving me and giving me the honor of serving Him in the Middle East. Currently, I have a ministry that has grown and is flourishing throughout the Arab world by the

grace of God. Christ is worthy of us risking our lives to share His Gospel! Christ promised that He would build His church, and I can promise you that despite the Arab Spring and all the other chaos in the Middle East, Christ *is* building His church! We are seeing Him move in miraculous ways. He is worthy and good! Please pray as I, and others with me, continue to move about the Arab World sharing His Truth. Pray that His will might be done and that His Name might continue to be spread and known among the Arab nations!

how good I was, because it is by grace that people get saved. Days passed, and I thought about going to hell if I died. I was afraid of the thought.

One day, the Mexican cook invited me to go to church with him. I did not want to go to church, because I had heard about the TV evangelists that were ripping people off. But he insisted that his church was different. I went to church for the first time in my life, and I started crying when I heard that Jesus loved me. I was given a Bible and told to read the Word of God. I became so hungry for the Word that I

read it until three in the morning. I was still doing drugs, but I became aware of the sins I was committing. The Lord showed me that I should stop doing drugs. I struggled with this, and I sensed my helplessness. I cried out for hours, asking the Lord to heal me if He wanted me to quit; that very night, He delivered me. Hallelujah! I stopped smoking and drinking without ever going to a hospital or putting on a patch or anything! ***Jesus healed me!*** From that day forward, I committed myself to going to church and following Jesus.



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"The world lives in a time of crisis. Christians alone are in a position to rescue the perishing. We dare not settle down to try to live as if things were normal."  
- A. W. Tozer

"If by excessive labor, we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master's service, then glory be to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of Heaven!"  
- C. H. Spurgeon



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