

# Simply Following God



*By*  
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*Dean and Doris Turner*

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**Dean and Doris Turner**

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## Foreword

Picture yourself in a hostile country, you don't understand their language, and you're carrying contraband that could land you in a foreign prison if it's discovered. You're trying to fly below their radar, but the security guards zero in on you. All you can manage is a silent prayer.

Sounds like something out of a suspense thriller, doesn't it? Not this time. It's just one of many episodes in the lives of Dean and Doris Turner. One of the many times they had to believe their God would see them through.

This book about Dean and Doris Turner's ministry calling will inspire anyone who has sensed in their heart that God is calling them to the ministry or the mission field. To go out in faith and the boldness of the Lord can only be accomplished through grace. It is amazing to us that anyone would have the confidence to sell their possessions, move to a foreign nation, and then work for a period of twenty plus years with little more than a desire to minister to the lost and hurting abroad. Yet that is exactly what Dean and Doris Turner have done. In spite of seemingly insurmountable odds, they trusted God to fulfill His promises to them as they pursued the calling placed on their lives.

Their faithfulness to the Lord's calling and love for people has resulted in many lives changed for God's glory. The amazing stories told in this book are reminders to each of us of the faithfulness of God to protect and anoint his elect and also to His covenant promises.

We know firsthand of the sincerity of heart and commitment to the people of Eastern Europe they have shown. Their love for the people in that area spurred them into action even when their governments were against anything associated with the Lord Jesus Christ. This book

will challenge your level of faith as you witness the faithfulness of God in the lives of this precious family, and inspire you to believe for the promises in your own life.

We consider it an honor to be their pastors and to be able to participate with them in ministry through support and prayer.

Pastors Billy and Brenda Hunter  
Christian Family Fellowship  
Antlers, Oklahoma

## Chapter 1

# God has a Plan

"God has a plan for your life!" How many times have we heard this before? I've even preached on it. It is easy to tell others about it, but what about when it comes to our own life? Okay, He has a plan for my life – now what do I do?

Then we hear the next thing – "Do you know what God's will is for your life?" Let's be honest for a moment. If you are like me, there have been a lot of times when you really didn't have a clue as to what God's will was for your life – or am I the only one!

In ministry, we hear time after time: "Will you please pray with me that I will find the will of the Lord for my life." I heard one pastor say that up to 90% of the body of Christ is searching for the will of God in their lives. That is scary! How are we ever going to get the work done when we don't even know what His will is?

Yes, the Word of God tells us what the general will of God is for believers. But after this – well, I guess we are on our own to find the rest, aren't we. This is where that difficult five letter word kicks in – "Faith." I don't want to sound negative, but I think you can identify with me that walking by faith can be difficult at times. Well, maybe it hasn't been that way for you, but it sure has been for me. We all have to learn to believe, or trust, our Father enough to follow Him, don't we?

Another thing I have noticed is that God never seems to tell us everything, and doesn't show us the whole picture, either. You may not agree with me, but I am glad He doesn't. Why? Because I couldn't handle it, and would probably run the opposite direction. He will almost always

start out with little seeds planted in our life – things to get our attention. He uses our experiences in life, too.

I like what Paul says in Ephesians 2:10. One translation says it this way: "God has made us what we are. He has created us in Christ Jesus to live lives filled with good works that he has prepared for us to do." It is God's idea for us to live lives filled with the good works which He has "already" prepared for us. The plan is already in motion; all we have to do is simply follow Him into it. I want to take you on a journey with us about finding (or discovering, or just maybe falling into) God's plan and His will in our lives. We are often walking in His will without realizing it, and this is how it began with us. Let me show you what I mean.

When I finished high school, it was during the time of Viet Nam. Instead of letting the draft decide what I was to be, I joined the Army. After training, I was headed to Germany. Just before I shipped out, Doris and I were married. This was March, 1970, and a few months later, she joined me in Germany. We spent the first two years of our marriage overseas, and our first son was born during that time, too. I finished my tour of duty there, and then got out of the service. We didn't realize it, but this was the first step in our preparation for what would come later.

Doris, even as a young girl, had dreams of traveling to Europe and seeing the sights she had read about. Hearing her uncle who had fought in WWII speak a few words in French, and talk about his experiences just added fuel to the fire. She'd had some seeds planted in her a long time before she met me, and our time in Germany was such a joy to her. Not me. When my time was over, I was glad to get back to the good old USA. I was a home boy, and staying in the States was fine with me.

But something was happening. For the next 13 years after we had left Germany, Doris and I both kept having dreams about being back there. The plan was in motion

and we were in it, even when I was away from the Lord for a while. Praise God, that on June 29, 1975, I came back to Him. And for the first time in my life, Jesus really became my Lord. After this, we became so hungry to do something for the kingdom; we got busy with anything we could find to do. This was also a part of the preparation.

We kept feeling this drawing back to Germany. What was the significance of it? What were we to do with it? What was God trying to tell us? We had lots of questions. I didn't want to go back into the Army (It just didn't seem right), and we had no idea of how, or even if, we were going to get there again. We sensed there was something for us over there, we just didn't know what. By this time we were in our early 30's, had 2 boys, and we couldn't figure out how it would ever work. We were willing, and had committed to following God where ever He would lead – but where would it be?

In the early 1980's, we were going to a church where we had the opportunity to go into Mexico for a couple of weeks one summer. I had vacation time due where I worked, and we went. Both ways the old bus we drove down there had engine trouble. But that trip was like fertilizer, or plant food, to the seeds that were in us. We were overjoyed to hear there was a chance to go the next year. We were able to go three times. Montezuma's Revenge wasn't enough to discourage us. Driving the same old bus that had to be worked on nearly every time didn't stop us, either. We were in love with God, and ministry, too.

1982 was a pivotal year in our lives. In March, we had the calling of God confirmed in our hearts. It was interesting, because it happened while we were just sitting in the car in a church parking lot after a service. Suddenly, it just came to us – we knew in our hearts that we were going into the ministry. We didn't know for sure what we would be doing, but we began to study and prepare for it anyway. Then in August, on the way back from our last trip

to Mexico, I prayed that dangerous prayer: "Lord, I'll go where you want me to go! If it is to do ministry in Mexico, I'll do it. Just tell me what you want me to do."

I didn't know it, but that set the stage. God was about to answer my prayer. In November of 1982, just before I woke up one morning I had a dream, or maybe it was a vision – whichever it was, it shook me down to my toes. It was about the communist nations of Europe. After getting up, I struggled to get ready to leave for work – it is hard to shave when you are crying like a baby. Finally, I got in the car and attempted to drive off.

Less than one block from the house, I yelled out, "I'll do it!" Then I became so overwhelmed, I had to stop the car for a while. It was wonderful. It was like a bucket of warm honey flowed all over me. Finally, I got a bit of composure back, but by now, I was going to be late for work. I prayed a simple prayer – "Lord, help me redeem the time!" I drove on, arriving at work 20 minutes late. But when I walked in, a strange thing happened – the time clock said I was still on time for work. So I punched in, and then told my boss about the clock problem. He told me not to worry about it. This was a confirmation to me that I had heard from the Lord. The poor old time clock died a couple of days later.

After the dream, it was clear to us that God had a reason for all the desires we were feeling, and it was all leading to ministry behind what was then the Iron Curtain. We knew for sure that this was our calling. Now, along with our studies, we began to investigate the possibilities for ministry there. Time after time we would hear that we were too old to start out as missionaries, that we didn't have any language skills, didn't have enough education, or simply just because we didn't fit into their program. But we were certain of our direction. So we kept trying to find the right door so that we could go and do what we knew we were called to

do. It was a bit discouraging at times, but the surety of the call kept us going.

Finally, we contacted a group in Houston who said they would take us on as a part of their organization. It was spring 1984, and we were so anxious, we immediately said yes. The ministry we had connected with did a lot of smuggling of materials into the iron curtain countries, and they planned for us to become involved in this operation. So we began to prepare to be ready to leave in the fall.

Before I go on, I want to share something very important with you. Sometimes the zeal of the call, and the desperation and desire to do something, will blind you to things. I had felt some kind of check in my spirit about this plan we had – but I didn't know what it was. I was still learning, and didn't have much experience in hearing God. I guess that is why most of my dealings from the Lord about going into this ministry were pretty strong. He had to really get my attention. Looking back, I can see that the Holy Spirit was leading us, but I missed a turn or two. Was it wrong to join this group? I don't know for sure. But I do know that the Lord used them to get us started in the right direction, and also in helping us find the right connections. Let me show you how God worked in our situation.

Like I said, we began to prepare to leave. We sold our house, sold or gave away much of what we had, and I gave notice on my job that I was leaving. By this time, it was late September, and then suddenly, the bottom fell out. The telephone rings. It was the ministry in Houston. We are sorry, but the folks in Germany don't want you to work with them. (Looking back on it later, I can see it was God protecting us from heading in the wrong direction.)

All the wind was gone from our sails. I had just left my job a day or two before, and we were to be out of our house by the end of the month. I felt devastated. I knew where we were called, and to where, but now we had no place to go. I had

no job, and in a few days, we would be homeless. What do we do now, Lord?

We were worried, but God was already working. Within two days, we received a newsletter in the mail from a ministry in Little Rock, Arkansas. We don't know how they got our address, and we had not received anything from them before. We looked at it, and inside there was an article about a couple in Munich, Germany. I felt impressed to call the ministry's office to see how to contact them. Then interesting things began to happen. First, this ministry didn't know us at all, but they give us the couple's home phone number in Germany. So I called them in Germany. We talked for a while – remember, we don't know them and they don't know us. Then the brother said, "I don't normally do this, but would you like to come and spend time with us as you 'spy out the land' to hear what God has to say?" I was surprised, but said yes anyway. So the plan was made for an early December trip. We could see that God was doing things!

Doris had had a dream one night where she and I were talking with some people about Romania. They were going to make a trip there and a voice behind her told her to let me go with them. She never saw who was speaking, but in her Spirit, she knew it was God. Not long after that, the Lord connected us with a Romanian brother in Houston. He wanted us to help his family members who were still in Romania. This was one of those "divine connections" that were setting things in motion.

This God arranged meeting was so interesting. This man we met in Houston had escaped from Romania, and now, he was an evangelist here in the US. Most of his family members were still in Timisoara, Romania. BUT, he also had two brothers who were studying in a University in Germany. Guess where? In Munich! You talk about timing. The meeting with this man happened just over a week

before my leaving for the December trip to Germany. God was putting the pieces of the puzzle together. So many divine details were being worked out at that time – one “circumstance” leading to another.

Many of our future plans came together through my being with this couple who lived in Munich, Germany. You could just see how God was moving through their willingness to invite me there to visit with them. They introduced me to so many folks that would be a part of our lives for the next few years.

One giant step was meeting with the two Romanian brothers in Munich. This would open the door to ministry in Romania. The first trip into the "Iron Curtain" would be to visit their family in Timisoara, Romania.

The next connection was with the Pastor of a German – American church. He invited us to come and work with them. Through this Pastor, we met a soldier who attended the church, and he invited us stay with him and his family until we could get a place to live.

Connection after connection! More pieces of the plan! We now knew where, and a part of the what. Yes, we were excited, but at the same time a bit discouraged. There was still one big problem. We didn't have enough financial support to live in Germany.

We had already left our home by this time and were staying with my mother. We continued to try to raise support and it seemed to be going instead of coming. Many didn't or couldn't keep their promises. One Sunday morning we went to a church that we had not been in before. I don't know how else to put it, but we were divinely overwhelmed at the end of the service. The Pastor wanted to minister to us, and everything he prayed was prophetic about us – and remember, he didn't know us at all. Immediately, we began to have peace and assurance that it was time to leave, no matter what the circumstances looked like. The deciding

factor was that while the Pastor was praying for us, the Lord had spoken to both of our hearts, "It is time to go." It was like the gift of faith kicked into action for us. After the prayer, one lady came up to us. She told us that she had seen us in a dream the night before, including seeing the suit I was wearing, and where we were standing in the church. This added to the confirmation that we had in our hearts. So we sent word to Germany that we were on our way, booked our one-way tickets, packed and shipped all we could to our contact, and said goodbye to family.

On March 8, 1985, we were standing in the train terminal in Stuttgart, Germany, looking for the serviceman who was going to pick us up and take us to his home. As we waited, the cold chill of reality tried to set in on us. Here we were with 2 boys, enough money to maybe get us by for 2 or 3 months and no way to get back home. Not enough support to really take care of us after the money we brought with us was gone, and on and on the thoughts would come. What had we done?? It seemed that the gift of faith to get us there had vanished!

It was hard to fight those thoughts off because we were tired and had little defense in those first moments. But we had been praying for months for little details as they came to our mind. When our friend picked us up, he informed us that our boxes had arrived safely and that some members of the church had given us some furniture to help us get established.

We started to get our bearings and I immediately began looking for a civilian job on the US Army base. A job would cover the visa regulations and give us some needed income. At first, we were told that there weren't any job openings available for civilians at that time. Plus, we found out that military retirees had first priority for any jobs that did come open.

We continued to look for a place to live and we found an apartment over an electrical shop that had just about everything we had been praying for, except a balcony. The fact that it was right on the town square, and the bus stop was across the street, more than made up for that since we didn't have a car yet. It was interesting though that it did include a garage. It was as if the Lord was already preparing for later. In my heart, I knew this was the right place. Weeks before, I had seen a distinctive part of the apartment in a dream. When I saw this part in reality, it was exactly like I had seen before.

It would take a good part of our money just to get the other furniture we needed and pay the deposit, etc. But I heard God's voice very clearly to "take it" so we did. We learned later that the newspaper we looked at was the only paper that had the ad with the correct information in it. We were the only callers, and the owner was so surprised when we did! The apartment had been newly remodeled and had waited empty since about the time we had been asking God, specifically, for a certain kind of place to live. It was like it was just waiting for our arrival.

The day we moved in was wonderful. We celebrated every milestone victory that God had given us, and thanked Him that He would perfect the rest of the details. We slept peacefully that night, even though we were just about out of money – only enough for most of one month.

The next morning, we were awakened by the loud buzzing of the doorbell. The serviceman was at the door and saying "You've got to come now. There's a job opening you need to see about." I had the required experience, and applied for the job. The people at personnel looked at me and my application and said, "Where have you been? We've been looking for you for the last three weeks. There are two other retirees who could get this job, but we think we should give it to you." Three weeks before that we had

just been getting off the plane . . . It can be really scary when you think how it might have been, and how many details might not have worked out, if we had delayed our flights. Thank you Lord for your grace and help that kept us on track. Not too long ago, I remembered something I had seen in the 1982 dream. The statement about "where have you been", and "we've been waiting for you," was in that dream, but I didn't put the two pieces together until recently. God really does know everything, doesn't He?

We now had an apartment, a job with visa included, and income to stay more than just a few months. I began to take whatever time I could get to go to Romania, but that's another story of its own.

The seeds planted had flourished, and we were entering into God's plan for us. A great adventure was beginning....

## The Adventure Begins

Yes, we were officially in the ministry now, well at least we were overseas. I look back and see that it was just by the grace of God that we didn't become a "mission's statistic." We had no training to help us be ready for being "on the field," nor were we prepared for the things you face there. We did so much that was not "by the book." I praise God for the faith He dropped in our hearts that drove us, and helped us, to take the steps we made. Statistics tell us that many missionaries fail to make it through the first year, or don't return to the field after their first furlough or time back home. Praise God, we made it through the beginning battles. There must be something to just following God and doing what He puts in your heart. I am not talking about just "doing your own thing" and making unwise choices, but simply doing what He tells you to do. Faith got us there, and faith in Him would keep us there.

Next order of business, make the trip to Romania. I went to Munich again to meet with the two brothers from Timisoara. They gave me all the information on how to contact their family, and some ideas to help me on my trip. I want to tell you some of the details of what this trip involved so you can get an idea of the "fun" I had making the first few trips. (Really, it was a joy, especially when you could see the hand of the Lord working for you.)

First step, get a visa. In the beginning, getting a visa to go to Romania was not easy because you had to get it directly from their consulate. Since I was in a foreign country, I couldn't be without my passport during the time it would take to get it by mail. The only alternative was to go to the consulate in person. One problem, I was in south Germany, and the consulate was in Bonn, in the north. So

in the middle of the night, I would catch a train, make a couple of transfers, and then arrive in Bonn about 9:00 AM. The consulate closed at 11:00AM, so I would have to grab a cab to get there quickly – and hopefully they would process my paperwork in time before they closed for the day. After getting the visa, I would catch the train again. Late that evening, I'd be back home. I had to go through this process for each trip the first year or so. Thank the Lord for favor. One way or another, I was always able to get my visas for Romania. Praise God, they finally allowed visas to be purchased at the border upon entry.

With the visa in hand, I now had to plan the trip. To get to Timisoara from where I lived, meant I had to cross a large part of Germany, all of Austria, all of Hungary, and a third of Romania. This meant a 30+ hour trip by train on the famous "Orient Express" and on a Romanian "Cattle Car" style train. My work schedule at the base allowed me to have 4 day weekends at times, and these were the times I could make my trips. The dates were set, I bought my round trip train tickets, and on a Thursday after work, I caught the train. Here I was, on my first trip to Romania.

First challenge: At this time, I spoke very little German, and in most places, no one spoke English, but God helped me. He would bring someone along who would help me when I needed it. All went well, but then the border into Hungary was coming up. My first communist country and I had to purchase a transit visa. I have to be honest, I was a bit afraid. This was 1985, four years before the revolutions, and before the fall of communism in these countries. Would they let me in? Would they confiscate my gifts for the family? Would they .....? I had a good attack of the "what ifs".

As we approached the border, the atmosphere in the train compartment began to change dramatically. You could sense, and even see, the fear the folks had. They began to

repack their bags, hoping to bring stuff into the country. This just added to my own battle. Oh, but for the grace of God! For me, it worked out fine. I got my transit visa, and with no hassles. Some of the folks weren't so blessed and the customs agents gave them a difficult time. I guess this helped in keeping the focus off of me – an American coming into a communist nation. Challenge overcome!

Then the Romanian border was coming. This border crossing also went well. Now I was officially in Romania beginning a journey that would be a part of our lives for the next nine years. In Arad, I had to change trains, but God helped me find the right train, and to find out what stop to get off. Ah! Timisoara at last! All that was left was to find the family.

One thing I had to learn very quickly was that we had to protect the friends we have in the different nations. They were restricted in who they could have as visitors, and Christians were watched even more strictly. So it was almost as if we were always on a clandestine mission. At times, we had to dodge secret police, we could never talk in public, there would be people in front watching out for us, same thing behind. It was exciting, but we had to realize that these folks put their lives on the line every time we came to town. I was about to be introduced to how things were...

The train arrived in Timisoara, and of course there was no one to meet me. I was instructed to find a taxi, show them the address, and go to the family's home. No communication except to point and show the paper with the address on it. The driver finally made it to the corner of the street and let me out, pointing in the direction to go. So I start down the street with my bag. Finally, I come to the address. Guess what? I was at the wrong house. My first thought, "Oh no! Now what do I do?" But this was all on purpose. The sons were helping to protect their family. A

lady comes up to the gate, smiles at me, and pointed me to the right house. Once there, the family rushed me inside their gate and into the house. We couldn't understand a word each other said, but with hugs and kisses, I knew I was at the right place. Calls were made, and people began to show up.

Immediately, all the challenges, all the travels, all the expense, were nothing compared to the love and acceptance I experienced that day. Immediately our hearts were joined together, and I knew I had found my place. I had the opportunity to share some that weekend, and they accepted me so well. I knew this was what I was called to do – strengthen and build up the believers in this part of the world.

Too quickly, my time was up for this trip. They took me to the train station, and with tears, I took off for the long ride home. The return trip was quite different. Now I had experienced the journey, but most of all, I had experienced a new level of the grace of God. I was anticipating the next time I could go. I didn't get to go as often as I would have liked. If you made too many trips in a short time, the border guards would get suspicious. They would give you a rough time, and ask a lot of questions. Things went well most of the time, but not always – but that is another story.

We began to do things in Germany, too. We were attending the German/American church, doing what we could. This also opened the door for ministry to the military. We went to regular meetings and conferences the Americans would have with special guests. Then after a while, we became the first distributor for Harrison House Books in Germany. We would travel to the meetings and set up book tables, making materials available that they couldn't find anywhere else. We did this for a few years, and eventually sold the distributorship to a German Christian Book store.

The scripture tells us in Ecclesiastes 9:10, that we are to do whatever our hands find to do, and then to do it with all your might. And Jesus, our example, said in John 9:4 that He had to work while it was day, because night comes when no man can work. We followed these principles as best as we could. Sometimes we missed it, and we had our fair share of "man works," too. But God is merciful. One time, I got double minded and became involved in things that I was "asked to do" – I had become distracted from the call and purpose God had for me. I became burned out and it affected my health. But Praise God, He got my attention, had mercy on me, and got me back on track. It took about six months for me to become healthier again.

God has a complete plan, even if we don't see it all. The door was opened for me to have secular work to support us and keep us in Germany, but there would be a time coming when things must change. A time to step out in faith again, and to be led by the Holy Spirit into what the Father has planned for us.

## Chapter 3

# Led By the Spirit

It is so important to be led by the Holy Spirit, isn't it? We are a work in progress, and one of the biggest challenges is to always follow the Holy Spirit. We have been learning, but some of the lessons have come from the school of "hard knocks." Thankfully, not all. I want to share a couple of experiences with you that show the mercy of God in action – even when we don't hear clearly.

After my first trip to Romania went so well, I was ready for another one. The folks there had so many needs, and you wanted to do all you could. So on one of my next trips, I was ready to take in some materials, or at least I thought I was. This was to be another "first time" experience. But something just wasn't right! I didn't realize it, but the Holy Spirit was checking me about what I was about to do – trying to protect me. Every time I would pack my "contraband" I would feel an uneasiness about it. I ignored it, and passed it off as just being afraid. I went ahead with "my plan." (By contraband, I mean Christian materials, and especially children's material. At the borders, the guards would always ask you if you had any drugs, pornography, or Bibles. At times you would take "gifts" or "bribes" for the guards, too.)

All went well until the Romanian border. The guard came into the compartment, and looked at everyone's bag, but didn't choose but one to inspect. You guessed it; the one he chose was the one I had my "contraband" in. My heart sank. He began take it all out and inventory it, then bag it up. He even took my own Bible. Then it really became serious. He picked up the note book that had my teaching notes in it. They were mixed in with my notes for studying German, but could be identified. About this time, one of the

lady guards came in who spoke perfect English. Oh No! If she looks at the notes, I am doomed! Under my breath, I repented hard and fast, and was praying for mercy. The man handed the notebook to the lady, and just as she was about to open it, there was a commotion on the train, she threw the notebook at the guard and took off. Now I was alone with the first guard, everyone else had scattered. So in my broken German, I told him that I was studying German, and these were my notes, and asked if I could have them back. He said okay. Thank you Jesus! If they had discovered the real purpose of my mission, several things could have happened. I could be sent back into Hungary, and then possibly blacklisted and not able to return, or they could just throw me in jail. The guard just picked up the contraband, handed me a piece of paper with the inventory on it, and left. I was released to continue on my journey.

The train continued on to Arad, but I felt horrible. I had let the people down who trusted me. I had lost all the materials, including my own Bible! But most of all, I had let my Jesus down when He tried to warn me. But that is not the end of the story!

I arrived at Timisoara, and was backing off of the train with my bag, when two arms grabbed me, hugged me, and I heard a voice that told me that they loved me. One of the family members had met me at the train. That helped, but I was still feeling bad about the loss. I get to the house and I tell them what has happened. They tell me it is okay. They go and open a drawer and then hand me a Bible in English. So I went to work.

That weekend proved to be one of the most powerful times we have ever had. There was a one healing that occurred that was testified about for years. What I thought was a failure, turned into a blessing. But that is not all. When I was leaving the country, at the border I asked the

guard about the paper they had given to me with the list. He motioned for me to go to a window in the building. I went to the window, handed them the piece of paper, and they came back with the bag of "contraband" they had taken from me. I took it, and headed for the train. I had gotten everything back! Nothing was lost, and the material was back in Romania via another courier within a few weeks. In this experience, I gained an important lesson. You better be led by the Spirit! But more than that, my Father is so merciful.

I want to share another example with you of how God protects us, and leads us, as we go about His business. Some time after the above experience, I was on a trip to Romania with a fellow missionary. This was a "mission," and we had some "contraband" to deliver at different places in the country. When we first went in, one of the guards found a cassette in the car's player which happened to be Jewish music. So he calls the chief over and begins a tirade about this being Christian music. I saw what was happening, so I slip behind the car and start interceding in the Spirit. The chief comes over, and after a minute or two, he tells the guard to let it go and be quiet about it. Then it came time for the body search and interrogation. This guard takes me into the cubicle, and you can tell he is fuming. He searches me and then says angrily, "I know what you are doing. You're one of them Baptists, aren't you?" (to them all Christians were Baptists) I just smiled, and he was fuming even more, and told me to get out of the cubicle. It was plain to see that no matter how much he wanted to, he couldn't stop us. God was protecting us again. Similar thing happened with my friend, and then they let us go – and with everything! Victory number one.

We make several stops and then we had a long drive across the country for our next "stop". For us to maintain secrecy and safety there is often no contact with our

delivery points until we show up. The Holy Spirit prepares the way. Here is an example. One Pastor gets up, tells his wife that we are coming today. He gets his suit on, and waits for us. About dark, we pull in, and there he is waiting to open the gate. He told us he knew when we were coming, because the Lord had told him.

Finally, we get to our last city and our final drops. We were supposed to visit a church first, but there were too many police around the building, so we didn't stop. We then went on into the city, parked the car, and paid someone to watch it for us. I took one "package," my friend took another, and we were going to meet at a certain house. Suddenly, I felt this uneasiness inside, and I recognized there was a problem. When we met, I told my friend what I felt, and I thought it might be something to do with the car. So I left and returned to the car, but nothing was wrong. I began to pray and intercede, because the uneasiness did not lift. My friend quickly came, and we left to go outside of the city. As soon as we left the city, there was peace. After a bit, we headed back into the city to try and visit the church again, but the uneasiness came back. Strange thing was that my friend felt nothing. We decided that because of this, we would not extend our visas to stay for another day, and we left Romania immediately. My friend and I were both perplexed, but we were not going to go against it.

A few weeks later, I get a call from a ministry friend in Austria. He tells me that it was good that we left, because there was a plan to plant a letter on us, and then call the border and inform them what they had done. (It was highly illegal to take out letters and other things from the people.) Another couple had come through right after us. They planted the information with them, and did to them what they had planned to do to us. This couple was blacklisted, and the person who wrote the letter went to jail. Because of the mercy of God, and our following Him, we were spared.

We had planned to stay another day, but the Holy Spirit stopped us. Thank you Jesus!

Our main focus was on teaching and ministry, so we didn't do a whole lot of smuggling. But when we did, you could clearly recognize God's protection at the times it was needed. By His mercy and grace, I was never caught again. Doris only made one trip to Romania with me before the revolution, and it was special. Up to that time, the Lord didn't let me teach about the Holy Spirit. But on this trip, we had permission, and it became one of the highlights of our experiences there. Come to find out, the Lord had been preparing them, and some had already experienced some things. We just confirmed them. After this trip, this group incorporated the teaching about the Holy Spirit into the curriculum at all their training places scattered through out the country.

We all should be following the Holy Spirit in everything we are doing, especially when He is trying to protect us. One of the more difficult times of following is when it is time to change something, or He wants us to go in a different direction. After our first five and a half years, we were going to be making changes – big changes. Not just a change of location, but a different way of living, too. It was time to take the next step of faith. Will we be willing and flexible? Will we follow Him... or not? It is always more comfortable to keep the "status quo" and not rock the boat. But when God says move, uncomfortable or not, it is time to go. We really didn't have a choice; we had to keep on following Him. Because where He leads is where He will be, and where His provision is – and no matter the challenges, we sure didn't want to miss being there, too! Being in the right place, and at the right time with God showing Himself as God, is exciting! I don't even like to think about what the alternative might have been if we hadn't said yes.

Here we are Lord, let's go....

## Chapter 4

### Next Steps

As you know, the revolutions behind the iron curtain began in 1989. One after another, the Warsaw Pact nations became free. At this time, we were living about 60 miles from the Czechoslovakian border. It was so interesting to see the borders open, and how things were changing so fast. It would be 1991, before the actual Soviet Union would break apart, but we will talk more about that later.

We had an interesting thing happen the day the Berlin wall fell, and I think it was a significant indicator. We were having intercessory prayer that evening in our home, when suddenly; there was a change in the atmosphere, spiritually. It was almost like a wave flowing in, and you could sense a difference. Heaviness, depression, fear, and other things seemed to fill the room. You may not believe it, but it was as if not only had the people been freed, but also the spiritual atmosphere had been released as well. But it also indicated to us, that Light would now be going into the darkness more than ever before. We will have new opportunities to carry the Gospel freely into these nations.

I made another trip to Romania in December, 1989. And as I was talking with the folks there, we began discussing the "revolutions" happening in the nations. They said, "Oh, it will never happen here, it just can't." They were surprised! Two weeks after I left, the revolution began right there in Timisoara where we were, and then shortly there after, their dictator and his wife were killed. Now the restrictions were gone. A trip I made a few months later was totally different.

It was 1990, and God was already reordering our steps, but we didn't realize it. One day, we loaded up the family and drove into Czechoslovakia, for a little touring. It was the first time the two boys had ever been in a communist(?)

country. Little did we know this was the precursor to what was in our future.

After this, an American Pastor who worked with the military invited me to go with him to meet with a Pastor that he'd heard about who was in Plzen, Czechoslovakia. He wanted to see what his church could do for them. It sounded interesting, so I went with him. This turned out to be one of those "divine connections" that would later connect us with the people in Klatovy, our next destination. We didn't know it then. We were just helping another Pastor with his projects.

Later in the year, things began to change for us. The college I was working for lost their contract, and another school was taking over. I had a choice to make. Do I go with the other school with reduced hours and less salary, or do I move on? It was a tough decision, but I felt in my heart that God wanted something different. I felt like He said to me, "It is time to work totally for Me, and to leave the secular work."

What was I to do? We had an apartment, a new van we were paying on, and we would lose all the benefits of using the base facilities – including access to the American products. Plus, we would lose our visas to stay in Germany. I felt in my heart that we were not finished with our work overseas, but thoughts that it might be over did come at times – especially when it was "next step season."

We decided to follow the Lord! Then things began to come into place. A couple wanted to lease our apartment for a year. Wow! Now we don't have to get rid of everything and then start over again. We had been building our household for five and a half years, and you know how we Americans have the tendency to collect stuff. This also meant that we still had the garage to store the van in. They would take care of the van and start it up once in a while to keep it in good shape. So the van was taken care of, too. I

could make the payments from the States, and now all was set. God is so good, and takes care of things when you follow Him.

Immediately we were aware of one thing – how the ministry was to be supported was changing! But this was new territory for us. We had not been very successful in generating support in the past, and now we had to do it again! On top of this, the day we left Germany for a year in the States, we were not exactly sure what our next assignment was. We thought it might be in Czechoslovakia, but not exactly what. We needed answers, and we needed a lot of Grace. Help us Lord!

In the spring of 1991, I felt I was to make a trip to Europe and visit some of the places we had worked with for the past few years. This meant, Germany, Romania, and of course, Czechoslovakia. I believe it was like a "spying out the land" type of trip again. You know, get in the right place, the right atmosphere, and then "hopefully" God will speak. We were still learning how to hear, and recognize, the voice of God. We were getting better, but still not very confident in our ability to hear clearly.

The time in Germany was good. I had great fellowship and ministry in Romania. But still no fireworks were going off inside, if you know what I mean. So next it was off to Nyrsko, Czechoslovakia, to visit with friends. I get about an hour or so from the Czechoslovakian border, and something happened. Suddenly, I felt a heavy presence of the Lord, and had to stop the car. I was overwhelmed, and began to intercede in prayer as if I was giving birth to something. It was strong, and lasted for a while – and then it lifted. Based on past experience, I knew there was something coming. Something had been birthed in the Spirit. I knew I would be finding my answer, and that it was coming.

I got to Czechoslovakia, and all the pieces began to come together. We were invited to come and live there, to work in the churches, teach, and give some English classes, too. We had an official invitation, and in my heart, I knew it was right. We now had our next assignment. We would move to Klatovy, Czechoslovakia.

Having an assignment brings peace, but also, it opens the door to new challenges. The biggest hurdles were yet to come! I have heard it said that you can't have a testimony without first having a test. One of the first tests – convincing Doris to move there. I was taking her farther and farther east, and it was a challenge for her to do it. It was going to be an adjustment for all of us. We were leaving our comfort zones, and because it was a developing nation, we would have to learn how to live in their system. On top of this, our greatest tests were yet to come. Would we survive? Or would we quit?

## The Tests Begin

When I returned from the trip, I told the family what was happening and what the Lord had done. They said, "Okay." Thank you Lord for grace! We then began traveling to different places sharing the vision we had, and God was faithful. Our partners were on board with us, and the Lord brought new ones into our life. Support was building, but was not growing fast, and the amount was lower than we thought we needed, or wanted. We knew God had spoken to us, and we were going to follow after what God had said, anyway. Little did we know that this stand and commitment was about to be tested.

During that summer, we learned that life can still bring unexpected surprises. We were going to be parents again – Doris was expecting. Here we are, I am 41, and she was 39, our youngest was almost 16, and we are going to have a baby. I look back on it and often jokingly say that we were carrying on a family tradition. My father had another child at about 40, and so did Doris' father.

What do we do now? When we found out about our new addition coming, we only had a couple of months left before we had to be back in Germany. We have no insurance, how can we pay for the baby's arrival on our current income? Do we delay our departure? Do we still go? On and on the questions bombarded us. And on top of this, one of our larger supporting partners told us they could no longer partner with us. We had never faced a challenge like this.

By now it is August. We have to make a decision! We have less than a month before we have to be back. The apartment will be empty, and we will have to find a way to pay the rent on it. If we don't go back, we lose everything, including the van. Lord, where are you? So I did like so

many of us do, I sit down and have a great big pity party. You know, a party where no one but you and the devil attend – where all you do is talk about the problems and then feel sorry for yourself. This is where I was, and it was not a pleasant place to be in.

Right in the middle of the party, guess who shows up – the Holy Spirit. I hear inside me, not a voice, but an impression, to go to a certain story in the Bible. So I looked it up. It was I Kings 17:2-4. As I read through these verses, it seemed as if I could only see certain phrases, maybe they were even highlighted, I don't know. Whatever it was, the message was clear. First was, "Get away from here." Second was, "Turn eastward." Third was, "I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." I had never had such a clear word from the Lord as to what I am to do. Even through all the turmoil and confusion, my heart was crying out to the Lord, and He answered. Now I had the confidence to go forward. We booked our flights, got packed, and off we went again into the adventure. But the tests weren't over yet. This was just round one.

The folks in Klatovy had been busy and had found us a place to live, and it was nice. So we made plans for the moving van to come and get our things. But just a few days before we are to move, the people who owned the place we were moving into found out we were Americans. Immediately their eyes flashed with dollar signs. You know, all Americans are rich, or so they believe. They then quadrupled the rent, way higher than we could handle. So now, we have no place to go to, and the moving van is on the way. Now what?

Thankfully, one of the church member's relatives had a two room, not two bedrooms, but two small room, apartment we could live in until we could find something else. The only problem, besides its being small, is that it was on the third floor, without an elevator. Doris was

nearing six months in her pregnancy, and having to navigate the stairs all the time would be hard on her. But what do we do? What choice do we have? There were folks ready to move into our apartment and the moving van was coming to move everything. AND, I still had that word from the Lord that we would be taken care of there. We made our decision, and continued to get ready for the move to Klatovy. I knew I trusted the Lord, and what had I heard, but with all the things which had happened so far, it sure didn't look like we were being taken care of "there". I was tempted to say again, "Lord, where are you?"

We were able to get our van registered in Czech. Shortly after this, the moving van came (a converted touring bus). We loaded everything up, and were off. We came to the border, I turned in my inventory list, and they let us pass through. We would have to deal with customs later in Klatovy.

Now the fun really begins. We had been living in a large three bedroom apartment, but now the four of us were moving into a tiny two room place. What to do with our stuff? It was interesting, we had some of it in the apartment, some in the basement, the rest was scattered in two other cities. What a way to live! But it worked, and we did well for as long as we needed it to be that way.

Soon after we got settled in, we had an opportunity to go to Holland for a time of refreshing for missionaries. Boy, did we need it. So we dropped off the boys with friends in Germany, picked up our Pastor friends, and took off. The time was wonderful, and we were so blessed. An interesting thing happened while we were there. During a communion time, Doris felt impressed to take communion not only for herself, but also for the baby. Little did we know how important that was, because trouble was on the way.

During the trip back, Doris began to lose water, and we knew that wasn't good. So as soon as we get back, we

head to the doctor's office. They monitor the situation for a little while, but decided it was too dangerous for the baby. They shipped us off by ambulance to Plzen, about 40 miles away. There, they try to induce labor, but to no avail. They couldn't wait any longer; they had to perform a c-section immediately. And on Dec. 10th, almost two months early, Matthew was born. Afterwards, they rushed him to the premature ICU at another hospital before I even got to see him, and before Doris could either.

Then another blow came. The doctor who performed the surgery was very nice, but he spoke very little English. He was trying to explain to me that Matthew had a cleft palate, but not having any experience with one, I didn't understand what he was trying to tell me. So he gets a book and shows me a picture of a more severe case than Matthew's was, and I was a bit overwhelmed. I had never seen anything like this before, and my son had one. Oh Lord, help me!

Their rules about visiting patients are different than they are in the States. It was late, so I was restricted in seeing Doris until later on. And I couldn't see Matthew until the next day either. So I got a ride home and told the boys they had a baby brother.

It was interesting as to how we came about naming Matthew. Because he was such a small baby, we thought we were having a girl, and we had picked out some names. But one night it came to me to name a boy, Matthew David. So when he came, that was what we did. I believe this name is prophetic. Matthew means a gift from Jehovah. David means beloved. He truly has been a gift to us, and God has worked so many miracles in his life, he truly is the beloved of God.

Now we have a new set of challenges. I have the two boys to take care of in Klatovy. Doris is in one hospital, and Matthew was in another, so I spent a lot of time traveling back and forth. But there was a victory in all of this; some

friends had found a house for us. It hadn't been lived in for years, was full of old furniture, and was a mess to look at, but we had a house to rent. So with the help of the boys and others in the church, we got it emptied, cleaned up and much of the inside painted. Then we started gathering our stuff from the "four corners of the earth" and moved it into the house. We had barely got it livable, and could stay there, just before Doris came home from the hospital. But, now we did have a place to live. Thank you Jesus!

When I picked up Doris from the hospital, we went to see Matthew. I had seen him a few times, but she had not. There he was, so tiny, and in an incubator. They wouldn't let us hold him yet, we could only touch him through the sides of the incubator. To be truthful, I didn't know if he was going to live or die. He was nine days old, had jaundice, had a cleft palate on one side, and had not gained, but lost weight. To me, it didn't seem like he was doing well at all. "Oh Lord, after all of this, are we going to lose our son?" It sure didn't look like we were being taken care of "there." But more challenges were coming our way.

A day or two later, we get a call that we have to go to the hospital office in Klatovy and talk to them. When we get there, they hand us a \$4,000.00 hospital bill for Doris' surgery and time in the hospital. I told them I didn't have it, so they said, okay, can you pay \$2,000.00. I didn't have \$200.00, let alone \$2,000.00. And this didn't include any of Matthew's bills for his time in the ICU. He was still there and he wasn't going to be allowed to come home for quite a while. This was adding up to several hundred dollars a day. So we went home. I was devastated. What made it even worse, it was almost Christmas.

I have to tell you, I was totally at a loss, and discouragement was very heavy on me. I was breaking down, and I had no idea what to do. I guess it was one of the lowest times in my life. What do I do now? David tells us

in Psalm 139, that no matter where he was, God was always right there with him. At that moment, I couldn't tell He was there – BUT HE WAS!

## Chapter 6

# A New Day Dawns

It was Christmas Eve, 1991. We were in our house, but not totally moved in yet and stuff was still stacked everywhere. Doris is still recovering from the surgery. We have a humongous doctor and hospital bill staring us in the face. Matthew still is not gaining weight after two weeks. We still have nothing prepared for the baby. Besides this, we are almost totally broke. My heart was broken, too.

It was cold, and I had to go down to the cellar to build a fire for the heating system – a reoccurring ritual. While waiting there, I began to talk to the Lord about all our problems – not really praying, but listing things. This is what I told Him, "Lord, it is Christmas Eve, and I have nothing to give my family, Matthew is in the hospital not doing well, I have this bill I cannot pay, I have run out of money, I have nothing left!" Sounds like a pity party again, doesn't it?

But once again, the Lord comes to my party. I hear inside of me a voice that says, "You have more than any of those around you, you have Me!" Another very clear word from the Lord! I immediately began to repent and fellowshipped with Him for a while. Then I went upstairs and to bed.

Christmas morning! It is a wonderful day, because for the first time, we will get to hold Matthew outside of the incubator. We couldn't wait to get to Plzen. It was so wonderful. You could just sense that something was happening, although everything looked the same. But that day everything began to be different for Matthew. He began to change, and started to gain weight. Before long, he was out of the incubator, and the doctors kept complementing on how well he was doing. He still ended up staying 59 days in the hospital, because they wouldn't release him until

he was about 5 lbs. Victory number one – our son is growing!

A day or two later, we get a call to go to the social insurance office. We get there, and they began to ask me some questions. One was if the church had invited me to come and work with them, and of course the answer was yes. There was a requirement in the law that required the church to register me with the social office within a few days of my arrival, and get insurance for me, but it hadn't been done – and now the church was in trouble. They would be fined! Oh no, now it is costing the church, too.

They then began to explain about a loop hole or something in the law that allowed them to back date my registration and thereby back date the insurance coverage, also. So they told me that my insurance coverage actually began on December 1st, 1991 – nine days before Matthew was born, and that he and I were covered. This meant, that in just a few minutes, all the costs of Matthew's time in the hospital were paid for – we would owe nothing! Plus, all his future care would be covered – including house calls by his doctor!

Now to the fine against the church. Praise God, it was only about \$50.00. But that is not the end of the story. We still have this \$2,000.00 bill to pay for Doris' care. So our friends ask the social worker about this situation. They asked if she was also invited, and they said yes. So now, the same procedure applied to her. Her insurance was backdated all the way to December 1st, and that wiped out all her bills as well. We now all had social insurance for medical needs, and owed no debts.

Victory number two – medical bills paid in full, plus medical coverage for the family.

We still had no baby things for Matthew, but the Lord wasn't finished. Not too many days after Christmas, we have a couple of sets of visitors from Germany. They came

in with their vehicles loaded. They unloaded everything you could think of for a baby, including the crib, a stroller, and all kinds of clothes. They unloaded food for us to fill our pantry, and they stuffed money into our hands. There was not one need that was not covered by our visitors and friends, and Matthew always had the clothes he needed during our entire time in Czech. We didn't ask, they just found out and came. Again, God proved Himself faithful to His promises.

Victory number three – Matthew's needs met and supernatural provision.

This was our breakthrough. We had gone through a trial and many tests, and only by the grace of God, did we make it. Another thing was the testimony this was to the Czech people. They saw how time after time our needs were supplied, and how the Lord took care for us. We made a choice to never let the people there in Klatovy know when we had a need. We decided to trust God totally – but isn't that what we are supposed to do? And several times when we were down to our last bit of food, and our money was almost totally gone, God would lay it on the heart of one of the churches in Germany to come and bless us. They would drive into the driveway; fill our pantry and our pockets. In the almost three years we were there in Czech, we never missed a meal, nor missed paying all our bills, including a payment for the van – plus, we had to make two emergency trips to the States, too. I have looked back at that time and I still don't see how we did it. God's math doesn't compute with ours, and it never will – it is supernatural.

We began to get busy with Kingdom work. We would go to the different churches holding meetings, and worked in the Klatovy church, too. We began a monthly training course which covered many subjects. It went on for a couple of years. Our son recorded all the sessions, and

they are still using the material to this day. That seed is still producing a harvest. The home church went through a transition from a denomination to a free church – which gave them real freedom to pursue the work of the Holy Spirit. There were some rough waters during that time of change, but through the grace of God, we came through it together. The church is more than twenty years old now.

Another missionary came to the area to establish a one year Bible School, and asked us to help him. So I worked to develop a lot of the curriculum, and then taught a number of classes the first year. It was a great experience, and through that, I was able to prepare a lot of materials I would use later on. It was a lot of hard work, but we loved it, and we loved being there in the Czech Republic (Czech and Slovakia split while we were there). We made wonderful friendships that we have until this day.

There were some difficult days, too. Doris lost her father, and I lost my mother while we were there. Losing parents is never easy, but not getting to say a proper good bye I guess is the hardest part to deal with. But with God, all things are possible. He heals broken hearts. (The year before coming to Czech, we were home and had been able to tell my father goodbye when he passed. This was a blessing and a comfort to us at that time.)

I want to share one more victory with you, and it involves Matthew. Like I said, he was born with a cleft palate. It went from the lip to the throat, so it would take some major repairs during his early life. When he was about five months old, his doctor scheduled him for his first procedure which was to close the lip and the palate. It was to be done in Prague, so we went to see the doctors there. They had pictures on the walls of kids they had worked on, but as we looked at them, we were troubled inside. Also, I had a feeling that this was not the best route to take, but it looked

like we had no other choice. So the date was set for Matthew's first procedure.

The day before we were to go for the surgery, Matthew got sick and was running a fever. We called the doctor, and they immediately cancelled the surgery. Just a few days after this, we get a call from the states from a friend who has a cleft palate child, too. She asked if Matthew had his surgery yet, but he hadn't. She then put us in touch with "Operation Smile." They called us, accepted us, and told us that they would do Matthew's procedure. Only one problem, he was under weight. But if we could get him to a certain weight by September, and would meet them in Bucharest, Romania, they would do the surgery. Now it was clear – the Lord had a better plan.

Immediately, Matthew's appetite increased, and he began to gain weight, fast. In August, we had a church contact us from the States. They felt led to give us an offering, and wanted our bank information, and after several tries made the deposit. It was for \$1,700.00. We now had the funds to make the trip. We contacted some friends and made arrangements to stay with a family in Bucharest while getting the surgery done. Then in September, we took off. A couple of days later, we were there.

We were in Bucharest, but the Operation Smile team was not. They had gotten delayed, so everything was a day late. We get to the hospital on Monday morning, and Matthew is the first one on the list. Then when they take him in the operating room, the power goes out in the hospital. So they spend some time drawing pictures on Matthew and planning how best to do the procedure. Another great blessing was that the members of this team of 35 were some of the top people in their fields, the best in the whole USA.

They did the procedure, and while Matthew was in recovery, the Romanians come and tell us we will have to

take him out of the hospital because he is a foreigner. Now what do we do? He needed follow up care and will have to have stitches removed later, too. But God already had an answer for that. A member of the team comes up and asks us where we are staying, and we tell her about the family. She says, "Didn't they tell you? We already have a room reserved for you (and paid for, too) in the same hotel we are staying in. All you have to do is go there. And don't worry about the follow up care; we will take care of him right there in your room at the hotel." Then a bit later they hand us an envelope with \$300.00 in it from a church in the States that doesn't know us at all. What a blessing!

While they were caring for him, they made the comment, "What are you doing special for him, he is doing better than any of the other patients we have?" All we were doing was praying for him. So they said, "Pray for the others. They really need it." After four days, we were back on the road heading home.

This proved to us one more time that our heavenly Father really had commanded the ravens to feed us there, to totally take care of us. He showed Himself faithful. When we do our part and do what He says, and if we will really trust Him, we will see His full provision. He is still providing today for us, and for Matthew's medical needs. He is so good to us. He has a plan for every season of our lives. Speaking of seasons, there is another change coming. We have another opportunity to simply follow God ...or not!

## Chapter 7

### Here we go again

In February, 1994, things in Czech were going like gang busters. The Bible school was going along fine and the first class was doing great. We were real busy, and able to accomplish a lot of things. It was like being in a comfort zone – it was easy to flow with it. But inside me, something was changing. I kept hearing that it was time to leave. This particular season was drawing to a close, and it was time to enter into the next phase of our lives.

I kept saying, "No, I don't want to. There is so much we are doing here and can do." I argued with the Lord for a time, but it does no good. Sure we could disobey, but we had better not. The icing on the cake that convinced us that we had to go was when it came time to renew our visas for the next year. The visa office told us that THEY had made a mistake for the last couple of years, and that our older sons were actually in the country illegally. As a result, they had to leave in ninety days, or would be in trouble. Okay Lord, you win. The grace for our boys to stay was being lifted, and for us as well. So in April, Doris and the three boys left for the States. I needed to stay until June to finish things up at the Bible School. Plus, I had to get rid of almost all of our stuff, and then clear customs so I could legally leave. We were only able to send one large crate, so there wasn't much we could take home with us.

To add to this, after nine years, the burden for Romania lifted, and I realized that our assignment there was finished. So I didn't even have that assignment anymore, either. "Lord, what are you doing?"

I was so discouraged. I loved what we were doing, and we were having a lot of success. I didn't understand why He would do this. We were without an assignment again. I had

no idea what was coming next. He did give me one word, though. It was time for the older boys to be established in their own lives in the States. At 23 and almost 19, it was time. They had been such a blessing and were such a great help to us, and especially good with Matthew.

Okay, I understood this part, but what about ministry? For months no answer! I felt like I had been fired. God had another plan, but He needed to work on us before we went into it.

I have learned something. God's times and seasons are not always, if ever, as we would like them to be. He has to set things up for them to work as planned. A friend of ours told us one time that God has to work on both ends of His plan for us. He prepares us for it, but also he prepares those we will work with on the other end. When things are not completed on the other end as quickly as we are prepared to go, there will be a delay. And sometimes, we are the reason for the delay. If we get ahead of God, we will get there before things are ready, and the plan will not work as God wanted. We may be in the right place, but at the wrong time. Timing, and the waiting, have been some of the most difficult things in ministry for me to accept. And walking it out is often hard for me, too.

In the fall, I made a trip back to Czech, and took my first trip into Russia. This was quite an experience. I went to Siberia to teach for one week of an eight week Bible school, and it was wonderful. That week, I think, caused me to fall in love with the Russian people. I didn't know it, but this was preparation for another season that was coming later. God doesn't do anything by accident. It is all according to plan.

I still had no assignment. Then one day, my mission's office has a question for me. Would you consider going to Estonia to help another missionary in his work. Where was Estonia? I hadn't even heard of it before. I prayed about it, and decided it would be good to make a trip. An interesting

thing was happening in Estonia while I was talking with my mission's office in Dallas about making a trip. The missionaries were just praying and asking the Lord to send them some help. Then immediately after their prayer, the fax machine receives the fax asking about my coming to visit. Do you think God had something to do with that? So a trip was planned for after the first of the year. Here I go again, spying out the land, looking for an answer from God. You would think I had learned better by now. But each time we start on a new journey, we have to stretch our faith again. Thankfully He is full of mercy, and puts up with our weak times.

For some time before the trip, the Lord had especially been working on me. He was about to take me to another level with Him where I had never been before. In February, 1995, God touched our lives in a special way, and we have not been the same since. Our hunger for intimacy and relationship with Him has grown so much since then. God needed to work on us before leading us into the next part of our journey.

Shortly after this experience, I was in Estonia visiting with these missionaries. I could tell almost immediately that my life was different, and there was more power at times. I got my answer; Estonia was to be our next step. September, 1995, Doris, Matthew, and I moved to Laeva, Estonia – another move farther east. This was our first country which was actually a part of the former Soviet Union. They had just won their independence in 1991, so we had to grow some more and learn to adapt like we had done in Czech.

We began to work with the missionaries, and started to build relationships. We had come only with what we could bring with us in suitcases, so we actually were starting over again to build up our household. But God is faithful, and He helped us to get things going again. Before long, we were immersed in the work and getting busier and busier.

Things are not always as they appear. There were new challenges coming, and trying times were on the horizon. We were in a new season now, and we had a job to do. God had a purpose for this assignment, but it wasn't immediately apparent to us. Storms were coming....

## The Gathering Storms

We did a lot of work with a Spirit filled Lutheran Pastor. He had a network of Churches in many parts of the country, so the other missionary and I would travel to the different places to minister. Working with the New Life Churches was great, but also, it kept us quite busy. We were continually building relationships which would become very important later.

After a time, the Pastor wanted to start a Bible school, and asked us to help. The other missionary took the lead, and I helped him with it. I so enjoyed teaching in that type of setting again. The first semester went very well, and the students were growing.

This Pastor was always concerned about having a Spiritual covering for his life and ministry. His peers, mostly traditional Lutheran Pastors, were constantly on his case about it, and about uniting with them. Their favorite saying was, "When the Russians retake the country again, you will need us!" They were so negative and seemed to have no hope that Estonia would maintain their freedom. After all, Estonia had only experienced a few years of freedom in the previous 900 years of being occupied by different nations. So the pressure was very real for him.

The other missionary had located some leaders in the States who offered to provide a covering for him, but it wasn't what he wanted. So he decided he wanted to join up with a Charismatic splinter group of a denomination. He was very traditional in many ways, and felt secure in that type of environment. He assured us that nothing would change, so we were okay with it, and supported him in his decision. A number of the churches thought things would be okay, too.

Then suddenly after a few months, things did change. The Bible School was now to become a "denominational" deacon training center. Then he decided he didn't want me as a teacher any more, nor could he cooperate with the other missionary. After this, he decided that all the network churches should become this new "denomination." This split the organization, and those who didn't think the change was right, well, he stopped fellowshiping with them.

So here we were, right in the middle of a storm. There was confusion and a lack of understanding among the churches. They felt abandoned, angry, but most of all, they were hurting. I feel like this situation was one of the main reasons we had been called to come to Estonia. They needed help, comfort, and healing. We had been building relationships and trust, and now they were calling on us for help.

We spent a lot of time doing "battlefield damage cleanup." We kept traveling to, teaching in, and loving on these churches and others too, for some time. And with the grace of God, the churches became stable again, and kept moving forward. Thank you Lord for your grace, and for our being at the right place, at the right time, to accomplish what needed to be done.

The work was going along pretty good again, but there was another storm coming. The missionary we were working with had some situations, and needed to return to the States. Because of the suddenness of their departure, they could not finish things, and those tasks were left to us. It was a sad time for us, and for the folks they had worked with for a number of years. But praise God, He is so merciful to us, and He always gives us the grace we need – if we will ask for it.

Not everything you do in ministry is joyful, or fulfilling – or at least it doesn't seem that way. As we have watched over the years, it seems that more than once, we have been sent

into situations, or problems, to be either peace makers, or to solve problems. This assignment was one of these. We are so glad that the Lord trusted us with this assignment, but it is never easy, and at times, it hurts. And in these times, we must battle the enemy's attempts to make us bitter. Bitterness, and his partner hatred, will destroy you. We must not allow these things to come in, or we are finished. We cannot minister the love of God if we are not living it ourselves. Oh, but for the grace of God!

Just like in the natural, there is always calm after the storms. We continued on in Estonia for a few years, but the seasons were about to change again. This seems to be the story of our lives. Again, we just get comfortable, and now it is time to go. "But we don't want to go!"

## **Our Way....or His way?**

We don't always recognize when it is time to change seasons – or maybe it is because we just don't want to admit it. Leaving Estonia was one of those times. I had my mind and heart set on being in Estonia longer, but God had another plan. God's plan was a better one, although I wouldn't know why until later.

The visa laws were changing in Estonia. No longer could we just go to the Latvian Border and renew our visas every 90 days like we had been doing for years. Now you had to leave for 90 days before you could come back in. In essence, you could only be in the country for 90 days, once every six months. We were not the only missionaries affected by this, and many left the country. The only way around this was to get a work permit, and this is what we would try to do. I applied, and was accepted by a technical college to teach English courses. So we set out going to the different Government agencies getting their approval. This process was not completed within the 90 day window, so we had to make some choices.

The school year had begun and I was already teaching by this time. Because my permit processing was about finished, I decided to remain in the country, illegally, until it was done. The local immigration office told me that if they wanted to send me out, they knew where I was. They worked so hard to help me, but what about Doris and Matt? They would have to return to the States for at least 90 days.

We had a bit of a scare when they came back through the airport after the 90 days. The immigration people looked at a different date in their passports, and told them they had come back too early. It was a serious thing, and this meant they were stuck in immigration. But finally, they let them

come on through. I didn't know what was going on. I was outside the area and could do nothing to help them. The next 90 days home, we would go together!

Long story short. I did finally get my permit and taught most of that school year. The visa office had promised us an answer in August about the next school year. This would be right when we were returning from our 90 days. We returned in August to find out we had been lied to. Immigration had already made their decision in March – we were not in the visa quota for the year, BUT they didn't tell us. Now because we had no visas, we had 90 days to pack up and leave Estonia.

I was upset. I had it all planned out. I needed about one more year to finish up some things and get some folks prepared. Now I couldn't do it! My work would not be finished! Lord what is going on? We can't see the whole picture like our Father does, so we think "our way" is the only way it will work. To top it off, a Pastor friend of mine had some great words of wisdom for me, "If God wants you to be in Estonia, you will be in Estonia! If not, you won't." I didn't want to hear that! I wasn't finished yet! Changes of seasons, I still have problems with them. But I knew our response couldn't be but one thing, "Yes Sir!"

We didn't realize it, but the Lord had already set some things in motion. The "next steps" were already being prepared while we were there for that last 90 days. Let me tell you what I mean.

About a year before this time, we had met some young people from East Germany who were traveling through Estonia. They also worked some in Russia, and they invited me to come and minister with them some time. The first trip with them to Smolensk, Russia, happened during that last 90 days in Estonia. (This was the beginning of building relationships in Smolensk. We have traveled there since that time, including our living there for almost two years.)

Also during the 90 days, we had a team visiting from the States. They held a conference and some meetings in different churches. During the conference, I met a young Pastor, who was Estonian, but had planted a church in Sevastopol, Ukraine. He invited me to come and be with him. (In early 2000, I would make my first trip to the Ukraine, and have been going there since then.)

But what about my unfinished work? I was surprised! In that short time, the Lord worked supernaturally in the people's lives. What I wanted to see in them happened right before my eyes. God can accomplish things so much quicker than we realize. He had completed my mission!

With much sadness, we left Estonia in October, 1999. We didn't know what the future held. Once again, we were without an assignment. At that moment, we also didn't know how much of our future had been established during that short period of 90 days. If we had, maybe it would have been easier for us to make this transition back to the States. We walk by faith, but that doesn't mean it is always easy. But that is not the end of the story!

Remember my saying that the Father sees the whole picture, but we don't? Matthew, having a cleft palate like he did, would need more extensive procedures to complete his healing. This would cost thousands of dollars over a number of years to complete. We had no insurance. We had talked to one foundation that would do some of the work, but we would be responsible for the rest. It looked so impossible! But with God....all things are possible! God loves us, and wants the best for His children, including Matthew.

If we had stayed in Estonia for another full year, we would have missed an opportunity for Matthew. During the next summer after we had left, we went to a family reunion. We didn't know at the time, but it was a divine, and timely, appointment. One of my relatives asked me if we had

considered the Shriner's Hospital for Children, for Matthew. We hadn't. She told us that her husband was high in the organization and that if we applied, she could guarantee Matthew's acceptance as a patient.

This was shock for us. This was the Masons! I didn't know anything about them, and I didn't think I wanted to become involved. My first reaction was, "No! I am not associating with that organization." I was being religious, and was blinded by my self righteousness. But praise God, I had a good friend who gave me good counsel. He didn't say it exactly this way, but it was in essence, "Wake up dummy! God has opened a door of blessing to you!"

And what a blessing it has been! No, I didn't have to become a Mason. It is not required. We just applied for Matthew, and as they had promised, he was accepted. He was put in the program at Galveston, and in 2001, they started treating him. This year, 2012, they have started the last phase, and have promised to see it through to completion. What a tremendous blessing this has been, and he has had the utmost in professional care. We thank God for them! But there is more....

Within a very short time after Matthew had been accepted, my cousin who started us in this direction, passed away. If I hadn't.... If God hadn't.... We could have missed out on one of the greatest blessings in our life – but we didn't. Again, we were in the right place, at the right time. It is so critical that we learn to be quick to obey when the Lord speaks. I haven't always done well in this in the past, but Praise God, I am changing. Thank you Father for your mercy! I know I talk a lot about His mercy and grace, but I have learned that without them, I could have very easily failed many times.

Not only had our season changed, but the way had been doing things for about fifteen years was changing too! You know what they say about old dogs and tricks, well, we can

almost be the same way. Here was another step out of another comfort zone, the comfort zone of how we do ministry. Help me Lord!

This was a completely different type of season for us, and, the adjustments we had to make were especially tough on me. We now were becoming Stateside based missionaries. This required a change in our way of thinking. And after a lot of years of thinking one way, it is not an easy thing to do. We had to renew our minds!

For years, I often struggled with our going from country to country, assignment to assignment, because I didn't see others doing the same. Sometimes I wished that we could stay in one place, or at least in one language group. Then one day someone told me to look at the life of Paul. I saw how he traveled from place to place, stayed there for a period of time, and then went on to the next assignment. That helped me to realize that we are in pretty good company in doing what we were doing. But, that was before, what about now?

Again, I could look at Paul. We see that on his later journeys, he returned to the places he had been, strengthening the brethren. Seeing this aspect of Paul helped me with our "new" assignment. I began to return to those places we had been, "strengthening the brethren." Wow! We are actually following a scriptural example. So along with our ministry to Matthew, we had a mission to do as well. But there was still a barrier to overcome – the idea of living in the States.

Over the years, the definition of missions, and the way missions is done, has been changing. But, too many of us still have old, traditional, thinking which is difficult to overcome. My thinking was this: If I am not living on the field, I am not considered a missionary (I had been told this before!). After all of these years, I had to learn what being a missionary really meant. It wasn't your location that defined

you, but it was your being sent on an assignment. That is a totally different concept than I had thought before. They say that old habits die hard, well so does old thinking.

But we must change our thinking. Like I have heard it said many times, "The message never changes, but the methods of getting it out do." We must change! We must be willing to change what we do, and how we do it, to keep being effective in reaching this world. So I have been changing. With God's help, I have overcome this barrier!

So we just kept on doing what we were supposed to be doing, traveling back and forth, until.....

## An Opportunity

In 2005, an opportunity came our way. Matthew was to have a two year break in his process so he could grow some more. This meant that we didn't have to make any appointments during that time. Freedom!

I sensed in my heart that we should go to Russia during this time. There was a situation in Smolensk that was heavy on my heart, and one that they needed help with. One hurdle – how do we get visas for all three of us to stay more than 90 days? I had an idea. I had been asked to come and teach English a few years before, so maybe I could get a position somewhere. With a position, comes a visa. So I prayed about it, and finally got the okay. But the okay this time came differently. It seemed as if I was arguing within myself, explaining that the only way I could get a visa for a year was this way. I got the yes, but to this day, I wonder what was going on in that process. Was it just the enemy opposing me? Or was it something else. I am not going to speculate, because I really don't know (yet).

I contacted the folks in Smolensk, and told them what I had in my heart. Then I found out that one of the church elders had children in a private language institute, and the director was interested in talking to me. Plans were made, and then I was off to Smolensk. It was so interesting how things went. The director of this institute was so excited that I came. Yes, she was interested. I told her I didn't have a lot of the education and qualifications that usually are required, but her answer was short and to the point. You are a native English speaker, and no one else in the city has one on their staff. I want you to come and teach! I explained that I was doing missions work, too. She said no problem, you

can set your own schedule the way you want it. When can you come? Wow! What a setup!

We started the visa process – for the whole family, not just me. This was a unique, and interesting, situation. The nonprofit organization that was over the school was involved in bettering the relationship between the police and the public – so many people don't like the police. And, one of their top board members was a Colonel in the FSB (formerly the KGB). This became very important when we were in the visa process. Our documents were stuck in the FSB on a person's desk, and he didn't see why he should approve them. One phone call to the Colonel, instant approval! So now, after three months of process, we were getting our visas.

God began to work. All the needed finances for the trip, and for needed supplies, came in almost supernaturally. I had never had this much come in so quickly. The folks in Smolensk already had an apartment set up for us; all we had to do was get there. We booked our flights, and took off.

Here was another challenge for Doris. Again, I am taking her farther east, this time to Russia. I am so blessed. She has told me time after time, that wherever God leads, she will go with me. It was being tested again. But now, she loves the Russians as much as I do, if not more!

We spent the next ten months working with the church, and I taught business English. It worked out very well – not easy, but well. There were challenges in helping the church to move forward and in getting more organized, but there was a lot of progress. In the institute, I had a lot of fun. There was a time or two that I could minister a bit to the staff – encouraging words and comfort in times of trouble.

Living was different. We had no car, so we either walked or took public transport. It was good for us health wise, but challenging when everything was iced up and slick.

Fortunately, most everything we needed was about ten minutes walk, including to the church. God also brought Oksana into our lives. She translated full time for us, and became our voice for all the time we were there. She was such a blessing.

Too soon, the first time was finished, and we had to return to the States to renew our visas. It took another three months before we could return for our second tour. This time, when we bought our round trip tickets, we set the return date for mid July. I didn't know why I chose that date, but I had to choose something. We could always change the return date, and I had planned to do so. I wanted us to stay at least until our visas expired. Did you see that "I wanted" again. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

Ministry was different this time. The Lord had put it in my heart to expand more into the other churches in the area instead of only focusing on New Life. Also, the work in New Life became more challenging. It was like we had reached a plateau, and movement stopped. You have heard the expression, "Three steps forward, and then two steps back." Or maybe it was the other way around – two forward and three back, at least it seemed that way at times. It was as if what we had worked so hard on was being set aside for the status quo. It was heart breaking for me.

On the other side, ministry in other places was growing and going great. We did what we could, and as much as we could. The work in the language institute went well again. To our knowledge, I was still the only native English speaker working in the institutes around the city. The director used this to her advantage for advertising, and school attendance was growing. One time I was interviewed by the local TV station, so I had my "15 seconds of fame" on Russian TV. We had so much fun and fellowship with the people in Smolensk, even with the challenges of ministry. They are really in our hearts.

Once again, the time was nearing for us to make a decision. What do we do with our flights? Me, I was ready to continue on until October. But suddenly, I began to have a small check in my spirit about extending. At first, I brushed it off thinking it was because of the ministry troubles we had faced lately. Then at school, I was going to tell them my plans, but inside I heard, "you aren't going to be here." But the icing on the cake was a dream that Matthew had the night before about his grandmother, and maybe some other problems. He felt like we should go on back. He never has any dreams like this, so this got my attention. These two things were enough of a confirmation for me

Much to the disappointment of those around us, we made plans to leave on our original July flights. Even though I wanted things differently, I for sure was not going to go against this leading. I didn't know why we had to leave; I just knew we had to go. Once again, God had a plan, and we had no idea what was coming. God was about to answer a prayer and a desire all three of us had.

## **A Gift from God.**

We were back from Russia now, and began to adjust to life here in the States again. We still didn't know why we had come back so soon, but before long, it would become quite clear.

At this point, we had been missionaries for 22 years. I had drug my wife and family half way around the world a number of times to fulfill God's call on our lives. Now we were getting a bit older, and when you do, you start thinking about things. We had sold our house almost 23 years before, and since then, were always living temporary – things in and out of storage, and starting over a few times, too. Matthew's desire, he wanted to have a room of his own for the first time in his life. We wanted a home.

Our request was simple: First, Lord, we would like a place to return to, get refreshed, and then to launch out from. Second, the cry of my heart was that I didn't really have anything, any type of inheritance to leave for my children. The scripture tells us in Prov. 13:22a, that a good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children. I couldn't do this, and it troubled me. It would really take a miracle. Because with our income history it would make it very difficult to finance a house.

We also wanted to be debt free for the first time in many years. So we talked about it as a family, and agreed together in prayer. We also felt led to sow some seed towards these things, and we did. Then we just left it in God's hands.

In September, we went to a conference we love to go to each year. The conference was great, and too soon it was the last service on Wednesday morning. But something began to happen. First, there was a Pastor's wife who felt

led to give us something unusual – some tuna and some bread. After talking with her husband, they agreed and she gave it to us – "loaves and fishes." Plus, they gave us an offering, too. Suddenly, the Lord moved on people and they began to bring offerings to us – the first gift was multiplied several times over just like the loaves and the fishes. We were so overwhelmed, and really blessed financially. But that wasn't the last thing.

After a time, a Pastor we had casually shared our desires for house with, came up and asked the crowd to pray for us, and with us, for a house. We didn't know it, but during that prayer, God spoke to a Pastor and his wife in the audience to give us a house they had purchased for an investment.

The service was on Wednesday, and on Friday, I receive an e-mail to call this Pastor. I did, and when he told us that he and his wife were going give us a house, it was almost more than we could believe. Another blessing was that the house was in a place, where for several years, we really had wanted to live. You hear about things like this happening, but when it happens to you, it is really overwhelming. I was still in shock when I flew out on the following Monday for a trip to the Ukraine. Wow! Our prayer was answered in a way we never expected.

They wanted the house to be nice, and it needed a lot of work, so it became their mission's project. God worked another miracle. Other people and ministries who knew us became involved – physically and financially. And a few months later, it was almost a totally different house. It was just like a new house – new plumbing, wiring, doors and windows, carport, and all new appliances ... and it was all because of the gifts from our friends. I now have an office, too. This was the fulfillment of a desire I'd had for more than 20 years. When we look at what has happened, it is very humbling to know so many people love you, and care about you, and especially how much our Father loves us.

We moved in, and a month later, April, 2008, we were given the deed to our own home. Doris realized something I hadn't. The house we sold in 1984 would have been paid for in 2008. I discovered another thing; this house was built in 1985, the year we left to go on the field. It is like the Lord was preparing for the future when we would have this home.

The best part is that God again proved Himself faithful to the Word. Jesus said that if you give up houses for His name's sake, it would come back to you a hundred fold – and in this life. We have always had a place to live all these years, and now He gave us a home of our own. He is so faithful and so loving towards His children. Not that we deserved any of this, it is just because He loves us.

We love our home. It is truly a gift from God.

## The Journey Continues

On our journey, we have had to learn a lot of things about following the Lord. As most people do, we made some mistakes as we were learning. We had things that wounded us, that challenged our marriage, we faced disappointments, and we learned to forgive. We exercised the prayer of agreement often, declaring to the enemy that he wasn't strong enough to change our mind. We were set for the course, to complete the plan that God has set before us.

We have by no means arrived, we are still learning. We still have times our trust is tested. But we are finding that if we will go ahead and leave everything in His hands, even though it doesn't look like anything is happening, He will come through for us. This can be super tough on the flesh (our natural man), but we can have victory over it through the grace that He gives us. We can overcome if we want to. It is a choice – will I trust God, or not? We do not have to fail. Always remember, God will not allow us to be tempted (put to proof, tested) beyond what we are able, and will always make a way of escape (always there to help you come through it). (1 Cor. 10:13)

We are still on our path, and are not finished yet. I find no place in the scripture where it tells us in ministry that we are to retire. I am told that we just re-fire and go on, and that is what we will do. We want to be like Paul, and can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." This is the least we can do for the One who gave His life for us.

The journey continues.....and the next chapters are yet to be written.

Our desire is that our story will encourage and inspire you to "Simply Follow God" in everything He asks you to do. He wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives, and in our family's lives, too. God only asks that we just trust Him. He has our best interests at heart. Like Jeremiah 29:11, tells us, "He is thinking thoughts about us, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give us a future, and a hope." He is waiting for us to give Him a chance to prove Himself to us. Why not give Him the opportunity to do it?

Our prayer for you:

"Father. I pray that everyone who reads this story will be encouraged to press forward, to step out in faith into areas they have never been before, as You ask them to do so. May they learn to totally trust in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen."



One version of Jeremiah 29:11 says it this way: “I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD. They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope.”

Our Life is a journey, and we can be sure that God’s plan for each of us is a good one. We cross many paths, and the challenge comes in finding the right one to follow. We have found that the best way to stay on track, is to simply follow the One who made the plan. "Simply follow?" Is it really that simple? Yes! If we will just trust Him, and then do what He says – it works! Is it easy? I can't say that. Every new step we take always requires a new step of faith.

This book is the story of our adventures in learning how to simply follow God. We have seen time after time over the years how faithful our Father is— and that we can always trust Him. Come along with us on our journey as we are “Simply Following God”.....

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