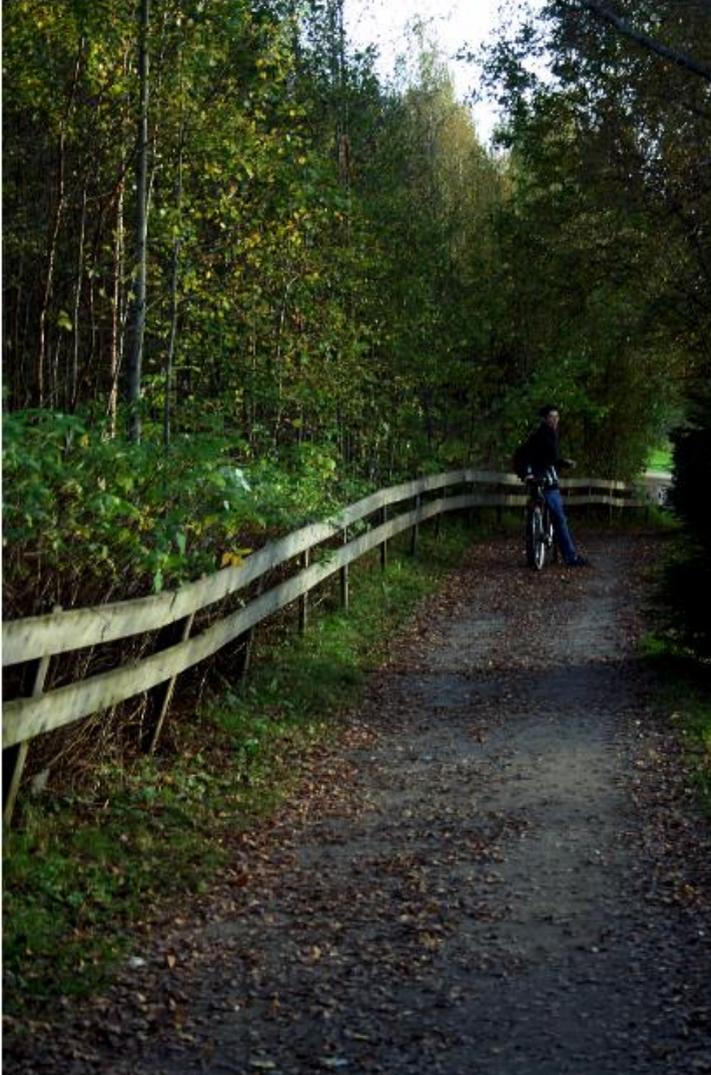


# With God as Our Guide—Book 5

(Compiled November 2022, By CQ)

—Unedited or proof read



I recently visited my son, and we had one of those beautiful father-to-son talks. I asked him what his plans and dreams were. He told me that his ultimate dream would be to own a house on a beach where he could mix business and pleasure and hopefully do some good for others at the same time in mission work.

He related a story which although it has nothing to do with beaches, reminded both me and him of this principle that life is full of the kind of surprises that put our problems in perspective. It obviously had a big impact on his life. I'll let him tell it:

"As I was driving onto a ramp of a large highway, I paused to let two semi-trailers pass by. I could have tried to speed up to get in front of them, but decided to slow down.

"At the time," he said, "I was complaining about my troubles – my 3-year-old son was still not speaking and in need of special therapy. I was having troubles in my personal relationships with others and it was tough finding enough money to make ends meet.

" 'Why do I have it so hard?' I asked the Lord. He answered, but not in the way I expected.

"I drove on for a few more minutes when a semi-trailer recklessly came from the opposite lane and ploughed into one of the semi-trailers that had just passed me.

"The other trailer swerved away just in time to miss it but the first truck took the full force of the collision. Both semis tumbled over each other and exploded in flames killing the drivers immediately. Fiery debris were flying everywhere and narrowly missed my car.

I tried to stop and see if I could help. I grabbed a fire extinguisher and tried to put out the flames, but it was too hot to get anywhere near the accident. Someone called the emergency service and help came soon, but the drivers had already perished. It was sobering to realize that if I had tried to rush ahead that day in traffic, I too would have died in the inferno.

“This incident put all my problems in a new perspective – no longer did they seem so looming. I was alive. I began to count my blessings.”

Nothing helps you to be more grateful for life than a close brush with death. Life is a beach, but it is one full of challenges and vicissitudes (ups and downs) that make us stronger after we come through them.

--By C. P. Van Gorder

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William Niehous, a well off and busy with life business man living in Venezuela, had everything change. To put weight on the government, a team of people decided to forcibly take him away from his home, his family, and hide out with him as captive deep in the jungle. No one knew what happened to him for 40 weeks. He didn't see another human face in all that time, as his captors were always masked around him. In that time there was plenty of time to think over the pattern of his life. The social life and busyness had crowded out things like time to be with his sons, or time to read the Bible and pray together with other believers. This “time out” in rough conditions, sleeping in tents or shacks on a hammock with sounds of wild animals around and the site of crawling creatures nearby, clarified so much.

The questions and trials strained at him. How was his family? Did they know he was still alive? Why had this time gone on for so long, without rescue? One day when it seemed more than he could bear, he saw a site that gave him courage. A fallen crumb from his small lunch was picked up eagerly by an ant, that looked much too small to carry it. But with bravery and determination this ant carried out his prize, over to his colony somewhere in the jungle. If he could bear the weight, and had the God-given ability to manage what it needed to, so could he.

Mr. Niehaus felt a new sense of courage to go on in his seemingly endless and hopeless situation. But just as Jesus was in the wilderness with the wild beasts for 40 days while fighting off the taunting of the enemy, and the Moses wondering with the people for 40 years before they were able enter the land of their destination, and Noah with his family heard the pelting down rain for 40 days that was washing and dramatically changing the world as they knew it, so had Mr. Niehaus endured his "40".

Those months in the jungle had changed him and his priorities forever. He looked up and saw some poached had discovered the hide-out rather accidentally, and set him free. The next day he was on a plane to join his wife and sons and mother, who had moved back to Toledo, Ohio by that time. His father had passed away suddenly, some months after his capture. I wonder if, invisibly, he was permitted by God, to be there with his son during this long and trying time. Maybe he wasn't as alone as he felt. No harm came to him, and not a moment longer was he held in that place than what he could truly endure. He was a better father and husband for it, having his faith strengthened that with God, you can go through anything, and come out the other side all the stronger.

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Joyce, a trained nurse living in Devon, England, was worried about her husband who was seriously ill with heart and breathing problems. After a terrible night, the doctor came and warned Joyce that her husband was most unlikely to recover. Joyce, however, clung to a promise from the Lord back in February, when her husband had first become ill, that he would make a good recovery.

At bedtime, Joyce made her husband as comfortable as possible, although his gasping for breath meant he had to sleep sitting up. Joyce describes what happened next: “Just then angels started to surround our bungalow, shadowy figures, all facing inwards. There were so many I could not possibly count them. The chief one came and insisted I go to sleep; no harm would come while they were there. I slept amazingly well, waking only once to attend to my husband. At 8 o’clock the following morning, I was literally shaken from my sleep and, as I opened my eyes, the last few angels were departing.

“The chief one was by me saying, ‘Hurry up, we have to go. All is well.’ And he was gone. I sat up and could hardly believe how peaceful my husband looked. He was pink and lying down, breathing easily, instead of blue and gasping. When the doctor saw him, he couldn’t speak for amazement.”

Sometime later the doctor said to Joyce, “Medically that was an impossibility. It was only your prayers and faith that saved him.” Joyce then told him about the angels. Her husband continued to make excellent progress.

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By Curtis Peter van Gorder

One day I was out and saw a new electronic scale that would not only measure your weight and height, but also plot the results on a graph to find out if you are underweight, the correct weight, overweight, or obese. The people selling the scale were eager for me to try it. I was hesitant. Getting on a scale is a bit like looking in a mirror – can be scary.

I decided to give it a go and to my horror, the heartless thing registered me as obese! What...obese? The word echoed in my mind. Not me! I had a picture in my mind of what that word meant and I didn't fit it – or did I? The slim and trim operators of the scale began to snicker. What were they laughing at?

I had a hard look in the mirror and examined the stark evidence staring back at me. All of my pants had become unpleasantly tight on me. When I sat down, I had to unloosen my buckle, which was sometimes embarrassing when I got up. Maybe I could make the waist bigger or go shopping for a larger size. I went to the store but when I found out they didn't carry my size, it was time for a reality check.

I took some time in prayer and meditation. A realization dawned on me. If Jesus said, "the very hairs of your head are numbered," surely every kilo must be, too. Our bodies the Bible says "are the temple of the Holy Ghost". In what condition was my 'temple'? Could use a bit of remodeling, I thought.

From what I read on the subject, the solution seemed pretty straightforward: If you want to loose weight – eat less and exercise more - Easier said than done. I liked food, and as everyone knows, it is

hard to give up something you like. In the 'reality check' department, I realized that even though I had now reached middle age, my food servings were still as large as a growing teen's were.

It also dawned on me that I had a few wrong attitudes. I realized that before I could make any progress in my weight loss, I would have to change some mistaken mindsets that I had adopted. I found it helpful to cling to a few slogans that helped me to keep focused on my goal of losing 25 kilos to become 'normal' weight.

Some of these were: "If you eat normal portions, you will start to look normal". "Overweight luggage costs", "Eat to live, don't live to eat." "It's only food." "Less is more." and "It's OK to be hungry." This last one was very helpful as I had developed the wrong idea that I should eat every time my stomach began to growl.

And the Bible verse, "He must increase, but I must decrease" took on a new meaning.

To keep the weight off once I lost it would require a long-term commitment: "Diet means life style change". All of these slogans helped to keep me focused on eating smaller portions. To begin with, I had my wife serve my 'normal' plate. Later I could trust myself to make my own servings.

Once that battle was won, it was time to fight the next giant – exercise more. I took up tennis and made it a point to do some kind of exercise daily. Although sometimes it was hard to get started, I found getting out and moving my body was fun, and looked forward to that time of the day. I started to believe what I had read: Scientists have found that

hormones that give you a feeling of pleasure called endorphins are released in your body during exercise.

I am still a work in progress, but now a few months down the line, I don't have to enlarge my waistline in my pants – in fact some became too baggy. I feel so much better carrying around less 'luggage'. So far I have lost 15 kilos and am still working on losing the next 10. It also helps when others encourage you by remarking at how much better you look.

Of course, my story pales in the light of some other dramatic stories such as Kelly Pless who lost 95 pounds and is training for running the marathon. But it is interesting to note that she discovered some of the same things I did.

Kelly had this to say, "I changed how I felt about food and what it meant to me. Instead of giving in to the temptation or convenience of calorie-laden or fatty foods such as cheeseburgers from the drive-through, I started to ask myself, "What do I really want to eat? Or, what does my body really want right now?"

Like I said, I am a work in progress. Hopefully, my story like that of Kelly's, might inspire someone who needs it. Losing weight is hard work, but I found you just have to take it one day at a time. Yesterday, I had an urge for ice cream but bought a mango instead – and it was so good!

Kelly Pless weighed 220 pounds at her heaviest. She lost 95 pounds through diet and exercise and God's help.

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With the rain slapping my windshield, I could barely see the turn signal of the car in front of me. Heavy rains had flooded Houston, and the highway was just about washed out. "We're almost home," I said to my three-year-old daughter Christy.

The car in front turned onto our exit ramp and stalled in the deep water. "I guess we can't go that way," I sighed and pulled over onto the shoulder to wait out the storm. An hour later, the rain still showed no sign of stopping. We'd have to walk home.

With Christy riding piggyback, I took my umbrella in one hand and started down the grassy slope of the overpass. By now the highway was a muddy river. I took a deep breath and waded in. A gust of wind ripped the umbrella from my hand and I lost my shoes in the strong current. When the water reached above my waist, I put Christy on my shoulders.

*Dear Lord*, I prayed, fighting to stay on my feet, *please help me get Christy to safety*. I remembered the prayer cards I'd collected as a child that pictured white-winged angels with blond hair and porcelain skin. How I needed one of those angels now!

Suddenly Christy was lifted off my shoulders and a strong arm grabbed me around the waist. I looked up into the face of a tall, husky, brown-skinned man. "Are you all right?" I asked Christy when the man set us safely on higher ground.

"Yes, Mommy," Christy said. "Who helped us?" I turned to thank our rescuer, but he was nowhere to be found. So much for white wings and porcelain skin!

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One night in early May, 1979, Barbara Burak heard her nine-year-old son, Paul Junior, call to her in panic: "I can't see--and my head hurts!" He had been suffering from an ear infection, and now his condition had become much worse. Sobbing, the youngster told his mother he couldn't even focus his eyes.

This event marked the beginning of their ordeal. Within twenty-four hours, Barbara and Paul had rushed Paul Junior to a hospital in Miami. Because of a diagnosis of encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain caused by injury or infection, the boy was in critical condition and was not expected to live.

The people at the Buraks' church started a prayer chain and began to pray continuously around the clock. "We had people praying all over the country," Barbara recalls. Of course, it would have been easy just to give up and sink into despair. But as far as God is concerned, the Buraks don't know the meaning of the word impossible.

Paul Junior remained in a coma for four days and then stayed semi comatose for fifteen more days. His condition went up and down. Sometimes it seemed hopeful; other times, hopeless. Barbara couldn't bear to see her son suffer like this, and so she went off alone to talk to God in prayer. She told the Lord she wasn't losing her faith, but she emphasized that He had to help her and give her the strength to get through this ordeal. "You have to help that boy!" she prayed. "You can't let him come out of this a vegetable!"

A definite answer to this prayer seemed to come the next morning, when an EEG showed normal results. But the tough times weren't over by any means. A brain scan the following day showed what a doctor described as "definite brain damage." But when Paul Senior heard this

report, his faith in God's ability to overcome the impossible seemed to grow even stronger. He said, "The Lord has kept him alive this long. He's brought him this far. He's going to perform a miracle, and He doesn't do halfway jobs." As for the diagnosis of brain damage, he said flatly, "I'm not going to accept it!"

These weren't hollow words, either. From that point on, when his father took such an unwavering stand of faith, Paul Junior began to recover. His improvement baffled the doctors, but the boy knew the source of his help: He told anyone who would listen that it was Jesus Who was healing him. Finally, he recovered totally, in defiance of a doctor's prediction that he would be mentally impaired. A child neurologist has confirmed that he's completely well, and since his release from the hospital, he's been an "A" grade student in school.

In short, the lesson from the Buraks' experience is that it's never wise to accept any physical condition as "impossible" to heal. In fact, the first step in tackling an "impossible" problem is to recognize that with God all things are possible.

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Ann Cannady recalls the day in July 1977 when a third test result confirmed she had advanced uterine cancer. Her husband Gary, a retired U.S. Air Force master sergeant, had lost his first wife to the same type of cancer and did not know whether he had the strength to go through it again. "We spent the next eight weeks scared and praying, praying and scared," says Ann.

One morning, three days before she was to enter the hospital for surgery, Gary answered the doorbell. Standing on the step was a large

man, a few centimeters taller than her 1.95 metre (about 6 feet, 5 inches) husband. "He was the blackest Black I've ever seen," Ann says, "and his eyes were a deep, deep, azure blue." The stranger introduced himself simply as Thomas. And then he told her that her cancer was gone.

Thomas came inside and again told them she could stop worrying. He quoted Scripture to them--Isaiah 53:5: "...and with His stripes we are healed."

Ann, still confused, looked at the man and demanded, "Who are you?"

"I am Thomas. I am sent by God."

Next, Ann recalls, "He held up his right hand, palm facing me, and leaned toward me, though he didn't touch me. I'm telling you, the heat coming from his hand was incredible. Suddenly I felt my legs go out from under me, and I fell to the floor. As I lay there, a strong white light, like one of those searchlights, travelled through my body. It started at my feet and worked its way up. I knew then, with every part of me--my body, my mind and my heart--that something supernatural had happened."

She passed out. When she awoke, her husband was leaning over her asking, "Ann, are you alive?" and pleading for her to speak to him. Thomas was gone. Ann, still weak from the encounter said, "I crawled over to the telephone and called my doctor's office and demanded to speak to him right that minute. I told him something had happened, and I was cured, and I didn't need surgery. He told me stress and fear were causing me to say things I didn't mean."

In the end they reached a compromise. Ann would show up at the hospital as scheduled, but before the operation the surgeons would do another test. They would keep her on the operating table ready. If the preliminary test came back positive they would proceed as planned. When Ann woke up after the test, she was in a regular hospital room, the doctor at her bedside. "I don't understand what's happened," he said, "but your test came back clean. We've sent the sample off to the lab for further testing. For now, though, you appear to be in the clear."

There has been no recurrence of the cancer. At first Ann was hesitant to talk about it for fear that people, including her children, would think she'd "lost it". They didn't. Even her doctor, she says, acknowledged at one point that he'd "witnessed a medical miracle".

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Kiki, the city's political leader and one of the most powerful men in Honduras. Kiki was well known by everyone in the city as a Communist Party leader and was the meanest and most feared man in that part of the nation. As a strong political leader, Kiki was instrumental in getting the president of Honduras into office. He was wealthy and owned several businesses, as well as the banana plantation.

Kiki was an avowed atheist with no desire for God. He was a man possessed with hate. He hated himself; he hated God; he hated everyone; and he couldn't get along with his family. But he was also a very sick man. He had been to the States several times trying to get help from the American doctors, but none had been able to determine what was wrong with him. Unable to hold anything in his stomach, he was steadily wasting away.

When his wife saw our telecast in which people were testifying to having been healed in our meetings, she urged Kiki to attend. At first he resisted, but about the fifth or sixth night, Kiki and his family began coming to the meetings. To secure good seats he sent his servants to set up chairs in the front near the platform long before time for the service to begin. Each night after the service had started, Kiki and his family strolled to the front of the crowd and took the chairs from the waiting servants. Kiki always had two six-shooters strapped to his hips. Needless to say, the crowd gave him plenty of room.

It was said that he carried the guns because there were so many people out to kill him. The local pastors told us that he had once caught twenty men stealing bananas from his plantation and had held them at machine-gun point for a full day in the hot sun with no food or water while they were forced to hoe grass on his land.

On the fourth night that he came to the crusade, something began to happen to Kiki. He had heard the Word of God preached. He had heard hundreds of testimonies of healing. He had witnessed miracles of healing each night. Through all of this, Kiki had been in excruciating pain. Occasionally, he bent over double because of it. Then on the fourth night, while he was sitting on his chair, listening to the Word of God, his pain suddenly left.

Kiki stood up and grabbed his wife. "I have no more pain!" he shouted. "The pain is gone! Something has happened to me! Something wonderful!"

That night Kiki and his whole family answered the invitation for salvation. A few nights later, they all received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Kiki was ecstatic with the joy of the Lord. He came to the

platform and held the crowd spellbound while he gave his testimony. Everyone knew him and what he had been. When he talked, the people of San Pedro Sula listened.

Kiki commanded one of the team members to accompany him in the daytime as he went from one businessman to another, giving his testimony of how Jesus had saved him, healed him, and baptized him in the Holy Spirit. Hardened, ruthless businessmen fell to their knees and cried like babies when Kiki gave his testimony and witnessed to them about the love of God in sending His Son Jesus to die for them. Kiki went to all the political leaders he had helped put in office and gave them his testimony. He began by saying, "Look, you know we drank together; we chased women together. But now I am different. Jesus Christ has come into my life and has made me a different person, a new man."

Kiki always broke down and cried while giving his testimony. He gave his testimony on television and cried like a newborn babe through most of the program. He said, "Once I was on political platforms, but now I am on a platform for Jesus Christ." His testimony, carried on television stations all over Honduras, shook the whole country. The people knew there had to be something to Kiki's new faith, something dynamic, to cause him to change so completely.

Eventually Kiki went into full-time ministry and helped establish many churches in Honduras. He has visited me in the States and given his testimony here as well.

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A young couple, new missionaries, were spending their first winter of marriage in the isolated Cree Indian village of Red Sucker Lake, Manitoba, Canada, in 1991. It was towards springtime, and lakes and rivers were clogged with ice, making float flying (landing airplanes on lakes) impossible. There was neither telephone nor radio communication to the outside.

The missionaries were in the initial stages of language learning. The small child of a prominent native became very seriously ill. There were no medical facilities in the village. The workers had no medical training. As the child worsened, friends suggested that perhaps the new missionary would pray for the child. The father refused, saying, "He's a false teacher. How could he do any good?" The days passed and the child's condition became critical, until it was clear to all he was dying.

The neighbors said, "Well, it can't hurt now to let the missionary pray for him. The child is dying anyway." The father reluctantly yielded. The missionary came to the tent, prayed briefly for the child to get well, then left. The next day the child had completely recovered.

Today, the grown child is living a normal life, happily married. Eventually, the father was converted, went to Bible school, and became the pastor of the Indian church in the village.

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LIVINGSTONE, ON SACRIFICE-- PEOPLE TALK of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt we owe to our God be called a sacrifice? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own best reward in

healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?

"Away with the word in such a view and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather, it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver and the soul to sink, but let this be only for a moment.

"All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which was made by Him who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself to us."

"MY JESUS, MY LORD, MY LIFE, MY ALL,

I AGAIN DEDICATE MY WHOLE SELF TO THEE."

The above words were found in Dr. Livingstone's diary under date of the day Stanley left him after failing to persuade him to take the only possible opportunity of returning home.

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IN THE cemetery of an English town there is a tombstone which attracts the attention of many visitors. It marks the grave where the celebrated Swedish singer, Jenny Lind, known as the Swedish Nightingale, was buried, and upon the stone is the text, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Jenny Lind was born in 1820. When only seventeen she came from her native land, and her lovely voice took the concert-loving people by storm. The good Queen Victoria often was found in her audience and signally honored "the slim girl with a marvelous voice," as she was called, by throwing to her a bouquet of flowers. From the crowned heads of Europe Jenny Lind received honor, and gifts were showered upon her from all sides. Wealth poured in, but all her success did not make her proud or exacting, as is so often the case, and she humbly wrote to a friend in later years, "My unceasing prayer is that what I gave to my fellows may continue to live on through eternity and that the Giver of the gift and not the creature to whom He lent it may be acknowledged."

A certain writer has remarked, "Nothing is more astonishing about the career of Jenny Lind than its comparative shortness. She sang in the English opera for only two years and retired practically in five years after her first appearance in London, though she appeared occasionally during the next few years, but chiefly for charities."

To many it would seem strange circumstances which led a young girl to abandon such a promising career and retire to the quietness of an English country home. On one occasion she sat on the seashore, reading a Bible, when one who greatly admired her beautiful voice saw her and asked, "How is it, madam, that you abandoned the stage at the very height of your success?"

Jenny Lind gave the following reason: "When every day it made me think less of this"--laying her hand upon the open Bible, "what else could I do?"

What a beautiful answer and how convincing! It was the knowledge that this precious Book had brought her--the knowledge of a Saviour's love which led her to abandon what the world counts of such value--riches, honor and popularity.

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A story is told of a Christian girl in India, who was about to be married. She was attractive, and one of the most capable girls in the institution. Sores appeared on her hands, and it was discovered that she had leprosy. She was removed from the orphanage and sent to the leper asylum. She was dressed in her beautiful white flowing garments, as she walked with her brother into that awful place. The women who were there were dirty and filthy, and their faces looked sad and hopeless.

When she saw them, she threw her head on her brother's shoulder, and wept and sobbed, "My God," she said, "am I going to become as they are?" She was so distressed, that those about her were afraid she might jump into the well.

The missionaries sympathized with her, and asked her if she wouldn't like to be a help to those poor women. A ray of hope came to her and she caught the vision. She started a school, and taught the women to sing, read and write. She could play, so the missionaries bought her a folding organ.

Gradually a transformation took place. The houses were made clean, neat and tidy; the women washed their clothes and combed their hair; and that horrible place became a place of blessing.

After being there for some time, she said, "When I first came to the asylum I doubted that there was a God." "Now," she said, "I know that God had a work for me to do, and if I had not become a leper, I never would have discovered my work. Every day I live, I thank Him for having sent me here, and that He has given me this work to do."

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The lot had been vacant and unused for the 2 years we had lived in this area. Now for the first time it seemed to be open for parking, with an attendant sitting at the entrance. I was (and still am) living in Lebanon, in the "ritzy" area, where ladies doll up for hours to walk to the corner store. I definitely stood out as I struggled—as gracefully as I could appear—to push my toddler in the stroller while carrying my newborn baby in the sling. Time for make-up or fancy hair-do's seemed light-years away. My husband had unexpectedly had to leave the country—with only 2 days notice—and had been unable to return for several months, due the legalities. In his absence I'd had gone on vacation with our co-workers, had a baby (a sudden C-section weeks before my due-date), and now had two little ones growing and learning along with me in this new stage of motherhood.

As I was walking with my little boys to the nearby store, that hot summer day, I saw the look I haven't forgotten yet. It's etched in my memory. The new parking attendant looked up into my face. What I saw could only be described as an angel or God looking through him to me. He had a gentle smile on his face, and eyes were filled with compassion mixed with faith, as if he knew my situation, and was tenderly trying to encourage me.

There was a godly light, a loving warmth in his gaze. It both caught me by surprise as well as deeply encouraged me—I looked back twice just to see it again, it made me feel so good inside.

What gave me renewed strength for any struggles I faced after that was the fact that this man was handicapped. He had no hands, his arms ended at the wrists. Yet he sat there like any, confident and comfortable with himself and doing his job. If he could be content, and tackle a job that it would seem impossible to do in his state—(counting money, giving change, opening and locking the gate), so could I handle things in my far more fortunate condition. I had hands. What could you say? Comparatively there was nothing I was limited in.

When I returned on my way home, he looked like any other old man, sitting there smoking his hubbly-bubbly. Some how God had looked at me in that moment, and used the perfect one to do it.

He sat there day after day, through the hot summer sun—at least whenever I went out he was there. Just looking at him gave me a boost of courage. After leaving the country to join my husband for a few months, and being able to return all together, I found the parking lot closed again, as it always had been. No sign of this stranger. But every time I pass that corner I remember “the Angel without hands” that held me with his gaze, and pulled me through, without hands. And I also learned the value of a single, well-timed, smile. I’ve tried to share mine more freely with others since then.

--By CQ

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I was weak and ill with hardly strength to do anything, with no clues from the doctor what was wrong. I was still recovering from a heart break, and nowhere near my desire to at last have a loving life-long partner. In my lonely late 20's I received the call to go work as a missionary in Mexico, and after that, when the war had more or less subsided to go as a volunteer in the world's "hot spot" of the Middle East. I'd have to leave all friends and family, go where I knew no one and could speak the languages, give up most of my small amount of personal possessions, have no known source of income. Would I do it?

I was certain God had called me to do it. I could hardly sit or stand at times in my weakened state, though I carried on with work as a private tutor. I took the enormous and brave step of saying yes to the Lord. I packed my suitcases, said good bye to everyone, and gave up for good, in my heart, any plans of marriage. I would just serve the Lord, and give myself wholly to Him and the needs of children.

My initial station was in a challenging situation where the first day's challenge was always "What do we have that we can cook for breakfast, something that would be enough for all the children and teens?" I worked long hours, sometimes from 6 AM to 11 at night filling the needs of the missionary families.

I got the illnesses of the country—and got healed. And I saw miracles of supply in front of me—like the time we had one litre of milk and God kindly let it pour and keep on pouring until all 15 children's cups were filled. Or the time we were lost and driving around for two hours trying to find a certain orphanage to give food and gifts to, and the second we rolled down the window to ask a man who was walking by the car, without asking the question he tells us where we are to go—

and we find the place without trouble. Angels at hand! In that humble place of service I had the strength to do all I was called on to do, and my health improved.

Then when the time was right I moved out to the further unknown—to the Middle East. Days after arrival I met the one who is now my husband and the father of our children. Leaving everything I was clinging to for comfort and support was a brave and difficult step, but through that decision to do what God called me to do—just me, not with a group, but as a singled out individual—I was able to know the full joy and life He wanted me to have.

I am cared for and loved very much by my family, and wherever we are, I devote my fulltime to ensuring the best childhood our children could have, as well as keeping our eyes and ears open for the needs of others, and my hands ready to help in whatever way I can. Becoming a mother has been one of the bravest things I've had to do yet. It's taken an enormous amount of courage to make the decisions that are right for the children, as well as endure the physical and emotional pain that comes with the package of childbearing. But now I enjoy the best health I never even dreamed was possible—and our children as well.

Courageously obeying God's plan for my life, though highly uncomfortable at first, brought the best dividends in the end, and was well worth all it cost. Jesus gives back many times over what we give to Him.

--By CQ

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Jean and some friends had gone to the lake for a swim and lounging on the shore. Jean began swimming out, and out further. Before she knew it more time and distance had passed than she realised. Suddenly she found her self exhausted and out of breath. She looked towards the shore, and her friends looked very small and far away. She waved and called out to them, but they heard and saw nothing. The thought came to her that she might drown, and never make it back to safety.

“God, help me!” Jean prayed aloud. Suddenly she saw something—an old, upside down boat, that was chained to the lake floor, it seemed. Though it provided something to hold on to, while collecting her thoughts, it wasn’t going to be her vehicle to safety. “Help! Someone help me!” she called.

“Splash!” someone was just then swimming near Jean, and greeted her. “Having trouble?” he asked. She had no idea where he came from, or who he was. Answering her questions, he replied, “I’m a safety inspector, and one of my jobs is saving lives in water, if I have to.”

Jean felt relieved that some help had come. This man encouraged her to try to swim back to the shore, assuring her that he would swim beside her, ready to help hold her up anytime she needed help. This gave her courage to try. So one stroke at a time she swam and swam, and true to his word the man swam along with her all the way to the shore.

She had made it! Her friends were relieved to see her, as she had been gone so long.

Emerging from the water she explained, “I would have drowned, if it wasn't for the lifeguard, the safety inspector who swam back with me.”

Jean turned to point him out to her friends, but there was no one there.

“We never saw anyone swimming with you,” Jean’s friends said.

Jean found out later that the resort didn’t have any lifeguards or “safety inspectors” employed. He had vanished the moment she was safe on the shore, was never seen again. He was certainly a life guard of an angelic type.

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While at a summer swimming party in Illinois, a Mexican woman who was attending was frantic. It was a traumatic moment for her. Her youngest child had fallen into the pool, and was lying on the bottom. She couldn’t swim and needed help immediately. Crying out to all around the pool she began scream for help, explaining what had happened. Scott and Betty were invited that hot afternoon. Scott was ready to dive in for a refreshing swim, while most others were standing around chatting and relaxing. The moment he stood on the diving board is when he heard the woman’s voice loudly, saying, “My baby! He’s at the bottom of the pool!”

Scott looked into the water and could make out a form of some sort, deep down in the pool. Into the water he dove, down, down, then found and pulled up and out of the water the drowning little one. Thankfully Scott knew how to administer CPR, and with a fervent prayer it worked. The little boy coughed up the water. He would live.

Scott’s only question was, why did everyone else ignore this woman’s desperate cries for help? Why didn’t others respond and jump in to help save the child? “Mother doesn’t speak a word of English,” one of

her daughters explained. “We couldn’t understand what she was saying,” the other guest stated.

Yet, Scott, who couldn’t speak a word of Spanish, heard the woman speaking in clear English, calling for help for her child. He was the one who was ready to dive in, and could help rescue, resuscitate, and pray for divine intervention. And it had come.

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I was the only one available to do something “fun” with the five teenagers that weekend; children of missionaries. They begged to go “camping”—freestyle. But since it was a bit drizzly and already late afternoon, and since we didn’t even have a tent, it would be a new experience. This is what they longed for—adventure and nature. The last time I’d been to the proposed camping area was a few weeks earlier. It was there I that I saw the largest serpent I’d ever seen in the wild.

We were hiking around, but before I took my next step I paused. It has right of way clearly. Going from the right side of the rough trail straight over to the left side. I watched as it slowly slithered across the path. How big was it? I only saw part of his thick body as it continued to move its wide serpentine body. A gentlemanly teenager turned when I called out “snack” and offered me his hand as it simply stepped over it, to continue on our way. I never saw its head or tail, as it was too big and long.

So, now to go camping there—open air style, was what I was being asked to do. I’d After discussing it with the parents extensively, it was decided to be worth a go.

In the near darkness we were dropped off at the foot of a pathway leading up a hilly trail. With flashlights we were able to eventually find a spot that seemed good to camp in. It was flat, and we spread our tarp and set up our sleeping bags for the night.

Attempting to have a cosy campfire was futile. As much as we tried, because the evening dew and light rain had already made the sticks we found too damp, no fire could be coaxed into starting. When the drizzle began to turn into rain we spread out an additional tarp and pulled it completely over ourselves.

There were enough clouds in the sky for them to not only maintain the gentle precipitation but contained the possibility to give a hefty downpour.—And in that area of Mexico at the right time of year it could really pour! We all prayed heartfelt prayers aloud as we shivered under our thin protection overhead.

There was no one we could call on for help but the One who holds the cloud's tap in His hands. Wonderfully, the rain did stop quite soon after the teens' and my earnest prayers, and with a wind blowing the clouds away we actually saw the stars as we went to sleep.

The experience had its own thrill, but not something you'd eagerly repeat nightly! With an early start the next morning (not really the kind of bed you enjoy "sleeping in" on) we enjoyed a nice day of hiking, sun bathing on the mountain rocks, soaking in the rays to warm up, playing in the stream, throwing "mud balls" and so forth.

The hiking on the mountain in the warm sun was beautiful, while the cliff edges presented the constant danger of places for any of us to fall, break a bone and sprain ankles. The known presence of rattlesnakes

likewise kept me on my toes every second, praying for everyone's safe keeping.

I was so very thankful for the Lord's amazing safe keeping of us during that trip. I had clung desperately to the Lord in prayer, and He had come through and proved His supernatural power. There hadn't even been a scratch.

If you had seen the terrain and knew the adventurous nature of this group of teens you would be as relieved and amazed at this miracle as I was. This was one of the bigger responsibilities and dangerous endeavours I'd tackled yet. It was not done without much prayer and claiming God's promises continually.

--By CQ

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The large boulders were just the type of playground our sons wanted to explore. We'd hiked up a hill to this rarely visited area. It was a place you didn't want to fall, with cracks in between tall sheer rocks, but the view was great. There was a cave that beckoned to be explored—that is if you were small enough to make your way through a rock hallway, and clever enough to make it down a tall sheer rock on the other side (and somehow back up again!).

It was certainly out of my comfort zone, and I was praying. I wanted the boys to free the freedom to explore nature, and face challenging situations with bravery, and wisdom too. Our two older boys made it there, but the last boy didn't want to be left out of the fun. It was very distressing to not be seeing those cool things his brother said they saw. He would need help, however. Help I didn't think I could provide.

Even though I'm small, the narrow rock hallway seemed barely big enough for the child, must less me. I prayed for God to do whatever was needed—for me not to be stuck, and for us to make it safely through this challenging boyish fun. It was downhill through it, and was able to squeeze my way through it.

With some help from his brothers the boy was able to get down and see the cave. But oh, now how was I going to make it back up and through? No ropes; too high to climb up and over; not wide enough to place one foot on each side of the crack and “walk” up it. The soft, spongy, slippery, wet, leaf-covered, uphill ground didn't offer any traction or resistance—but the friction on both rocky walls that pressed on me was enough to make it very difficult if not impossible to make my way through.

I took the first step and “push”! Something pushed me. Put out my foot to take the next step and “push” it happened again. One step after the other this unseen, timely help from heaven pushed me through this tight zone, when no other one could help me. Being a parent can put us into uncomfortable and challenging situations, while trying to care for our children and have the right balance of fun, safety, adventure, learning, and freedom.

I could not have made it without help from Heaven. I'm glad I can have it to call on while I do my best for the children God's given me. I guess sometimes the best we can do is try to take one step at a time, and the Lord has to do the pushing part, when pressures on all sides make us powerless to make forward progress.

--By CQ

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On Christmas Eve 1755, in a little Pennsylvania town rightly called “Bethlehem” a wonderful event occur for those who were brave enough stay there to celebrate it that year. The many Moravians living there were a people who loved God, friendship with the Native Americans, peace, harmony, and music; especially music. And they love celebrating “The Great Day”, which is what they called Christmas. Native Americans called the Delaware lived outside the town, and relationships between them and the Moravians had been peaceful until foreign powers pressured the Native American tribes to forcibly try to take the land where settlers were peacefully living. A terrible event was planned for the town of Bethlehem, and planned to occur on Christmas Eve. However, one Native American Indian that had become a Christian, and helped by running messages between towns and villages, came and forewarned the Moravians.

The people of the town prayed and met for discussion on what to do. Abandoning their town didn’t seem a safe option, and it was the day the children so looked forward to would be missed. For each year a “Christmas Surprise” was made: A big display of the manger scene. Each year was a bit different than the time before, but always artistically beautiful. The children would at last see what was created when they entered the room, feeling nearly as they had gone back in time to the first Christmas.

It was decided that they would stay in their town and trust in God’s care.

The night was spent in prayer, rather than in song, however the trombone choir would announce the start of Christmas Day, in the very early hours of the morning, while all was still dark and quiet.

A peaceful yet prayer-filled night was spent on Christmas Eve, until the music of the trombones announced the day at 4:00 a.m. That was the precise time that the lurking tribe had planned to make their destructive move. Yet, the musical sounds shattered the silence, startled them, stirred them, and they were in fear and wonderment at what it meant.

The Native Indian Christian man was running now through the dark, and seen as one of their own tribe, heard the leader say, in fear and wonderment: "Surely, Great Spirit watches over this place." Some of the Indians remembered the kindness that the Moravians had shown them and they were ashamed that fighting was now in their hearts. Fearing what judgments would fall on them, they turned and ran back into the forest to put as much distance as they could between them and the Great Spirit Voice that sounded from the sky. (As they took the music of the trombones to be.) A wonderful Christmas was enjoyed by the peaceful, faith-filled Moravians.

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By Rebecca Hagelin, The Washington Times, December 19, 2010

Marie Fiala and family experienced God's power at one of the darkest moments of their lives. Marie, a lawyer, and her husband Kris, a business executive, had created a peaceful, happy family life with their two sons and daughter.

But everything normal in their lives—going out for ice cream, the mad scramble in the morning to leave for school—came to a shattering stop the day their 13-year-old-son Jeremy collapsed on the kitchen floor, the blood vessels in his brain inexplicably hemorrhaging.

Comatose at first, then paralyzed and barely responsive, Jeremy lay at the mercy of his bleeding brain for weeks. There was little the doctors could do. In the weeks that followed, e-mail chains updated family, friends, co-workers, unknown friends of friends—countless people—about Jeremy’s dire situation and the family’s struggle.

As Jeremy lay teetering between life and death, a family member organized an international prayer vigil asking for healing. It was a simple request, sent far and wide over the Internet: light a candle and spend one hour at 8 p.m. on a Sunday, united with thousands of others, praying together for Jeremy’s recovery. So thousands did.

That night, as the vigil concluded, Marie received message after message from people profoundly touched by faith as they prayed together for Jeremy. His family felt God’s presence that night, and Jeremy knew the blessing of a peaceful sleep. But it was nothing dramatic—until 24 hours later.

Surrounded by a roomful of doctors doing their usual pricks and prods, Jeremy spoke out loud. And kept speaking. The jubilant doctors were astounded. Marie, who was taking a rare break at home that night while Kris stayed with Jeremy, got an unexpected, miraculous phone call. “Hi Mom, This is Jeremy. I am sorry to wake you up. I love you.”

It was the first of many miracles for Jeremy. Marie shares their story—including her own doubts and heart-wrenching tests of faith—in her eloquent, uplifting book, “Letters From a Distant Shore.”

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On a Christmas Day a young man, tall and slim with dark hair, was making his way south on Interstate 85 just below High Point, North Carolina, trying to hitch a ride.

For two years he hadn't been home; his family had heard nothing from him. He and his mother had had a disagreement, and he set off across the country, going from town to town, from odd job to odd job. He worked at filling stations and produce markets; he drove a taxi and picked crops; he was an orderly in a nursing home and a plumber's assistant. But now he was ready to go home.

Thirty miles to go, but a ride was hard to find. "Mom," he said to himself, "I'm tired and hungry, but I'm coming home."

The cold wind blew and a few trucks rumbled by. Then from across the road, he heard a voice call his name. "Mike! Hey, Mike, come here!" To his surprise there was his stepfather, waving, calling to him from his truck. Mike ran across the highway. "Get in, Son. We're going home."

Mike tossed his bag in the back of the truck and embraced his stepfather. "Fred," he said, "how did you happen to be here?"

"Your mother sent me. Just this morning in her prayers for you, she knew you were coming and that you were on Interstate 85 just below High Point."

"But how did you know I'd be here? I didn't write. I didn't call."

The two men looked at each other without saying a word. Then Fred started the motor.

"She's waiting for you, Son."

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The inspiring oratorio that continues to reverberate across the world yearly—Handel's *Messiah*—was a miracle in so many ways. Most notably, of course, the fact that it was completed in less than one month—a piece containing around a quarter of a million notes. But there was more. Handel's father didn't wish for him to learn music to begin with—yet his God-given gift and life's calling propelled him forward. He never married, or had children, and was often poor and barely able to keep up financially, yet he kept on doing what he was created for—music. He had illnesses that left him partly paralyzed and unable to play musical instruments, but he recovered and carried on.

His faith in God and belief in His Redeemer kept him going. He read his Bible and wished to let the scriptures be known through music. Though criticized for having the audacity to have musical works performed outside of the church, he pressed on, not heeding to the chaffing words and harsh attitudes. Sometimes at risk himself of having to go to "debtor's prison" he had a heart for those who had suffered that fate and the "Messiah" was a way to deliver many of them, through the proceeds of the concert going to this and other charities. He lost sight in one eye, and undaunted pressed on, continuing to compose and perform his works for the betterment of others—both the listeners as well as those benefiting from the charitable proceeds.

When he lost most sight in both eyes, he carried on the best he could, relying on a good memory. It seems in his heart was written what he was meant to do with his life. As long as he looked to the Lord, prayed, read his Bible or thought on the scriptures, and worked for the good of others, the many roadblocks and hindrances only made him learn buoyancy and perseverance, and could not stop him. He faced each test, and kept on going; ups and downs perhaps, discouragement perhaps, pauses perhaps, but eventually continuing on and reaching the end of a well-lived life for God, doing what he was fashioned to do.

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I was fatigued from a strenuous full day of our volunteer activities. Getting out of the taxi at our destination, I was so tired that I forgot an expensive tape recorder in the trunk of the taxi we had taken. Fortunately, I had struck up a very deep conversation with this taxi driver on the way. We discussed the similarities of our faiths and how God's love could bring peace to this volatile region of the world.

I sympathized with him as he had six children to provide for and he had to work hard to meet their many needs. We left as very good friends and calling each other 'brother'. Somehow I knew that this driver would not forget us.

After I had discovered the loss of our tape recorder, all of my friends and I got together to pray that the taxi driver would return the tape recorder. Then we had to do the hard part of waiting and trusting that the answer would come. At midnight the doorbell rang and there was the taxi driver with our tape recorder in his hand! We were so happy that our prayers were answered. We are still in touch with this man and we want to help him and his family any way that we can.

Our needs are an opportunity for God to work in our lives. Expect miracles and you will get them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed (Happy) is the man that trusts in Him.

—By Curtis Peter van Gorder

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The close brush with death changed the way a certain Ugandan man did things, which set him up for being part of an answer to prayer for a visiting missionary. The son of a couple living in Uganda was visiting them—he and his parents were fully involved with mission work to better the lives of others. When it was time for their son to leave, he would need a taxi to take him to the airport at 4:00 AM in the morning. To make arrangements they went to the main highway to hopefully encounter a taxi able and willing to help. Instead however, a man in a jeep pulled up to them offering to help in anyway—for free. They invited the man to their house, to get to know him better, and he shared his story with them.

The father writes:

“Years ago [this man] was working as an electrician for the city’s main electricity power station. A huge amount of electricity flowed through those lines that he worked on. You have to know exactly what you are doing when you work with main’s electricity, one small mistake can be fatal. That day, a switch was left on by mistake, and as a result, he was electrocuted. The mains electricity coursed through his body. He should have died, but he didn’t. This near brush with death changed his whole perspective on life. It made him think about what really matters”.

The Ugandan man told them, “You know, since my accident, I try not to make a move unless I hear from God. I was sitting in my room tonight watching TV and an inner voice that I feel was from the Lord, spoke to me and told me to get up and get in my car and drive. He told me that I would meet someone who needed my help. You must be the ones I’m looking for. Also the Lord told me to fill up my gas tank all the way.” This proved to be the sure voice of the Lord, as there wouldn’t be gas stations available in the early hours the next morning as he drove them to the airport.

This man showed up the next morning right on time, and not only didn’t he ask for money, but gave the missionary son a generous donation. His father writes: “Amazingly, his gift was exactly the amount my son needed for the missionary project that he was involved in at that time.”

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From Curtis Peter van Gorder

The New Year is often likened to a steep mountain waiting for us to climb. It is sure to be fraught with toils, dangers, and snares. But with the hardships there will also be joys, blessings, and victories.

To climb it, we’ll need help from our mountain guide, Jesus, who calls us to follow Him. He knows where the dangerous crevices are and where to step to avoid danger. If we stay close to Him we can reach the summit at the end of this coming year in full victory. Even the best climbers need guides when they climb unfamiliar mountains.

Many of the great mountaineers have sensed that someone was guiding them and helping them to reach their goal.

Years after his ordeal Shkelton described a mystical guiding presence that was with them during the crossing of the Antarctica.

He said, "I know that during that long and racking march of 36 hours over the unknown mountains and glaciers of South Georgia, it seemed to me often that we were 4 not 3 of us. I said nothing to my companions, but afterwards Woolsley said to me, 'Boss I had a curious feeling that there was another person with us.' "

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En route to Bulgaria. At the border the officials check diligently for smugglers. They pulled us over & started searching the van. One official started banging on the outside of the van & said, "One time we caught someone smuggling stuff inside the walls of their van!" While one customs official went inside the van with Philip, another one stayed outside talking with the head man. Inside the van the official had asked Philip, "What is that in that box?" & Philip answered, "Well, let me show you a sample of it!" The customs official popped his head out of the van & exclaimed, "I found something!"

At this point we all piled into the van where we found the official & Philip with the Posters! I said, "That's for JESUS! We're Christians! We're here because Jesus loves your people, & we came to give you a message of hope, that Jesus loves you & wants to help you during this time of crisis!"

The spirit changed & their attitude was like, "Wow! REALLY?!" They took the Poster & started reading it, & asked us to step outside. They asked us if we had anything else, & we said, "Actually, we have 10 Bibles with us too!" The man exclaimed, "Bibles?!--Let me see

them!" We showed them to the head man, & he walked over to the official who originally discovered the Posters & said, "Now, you're not going to stop them for THIS, are you?"

The official who first found the Posters came up to us & said, "If you give the head man a Bible, I'll let you go through!" So we gave him a Bible, & he was elated! He thanked us over & over again! When the customs official who had found the Posters started to leave, he turned around & said, "Go in the strength of Jesus!" Praise the Lord! It was really inspiring! We knew the Lord was going to do mighty things after that!

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A border guard told one of the brethren, "You can't enter with all this literature!" And the brethren showed him Mark 16:15 in a Russian Bible & the man read it. "Go ye into all the World & preach the Gospel to every creature!" Then he replied, "Go!" He let them cross the Russian border with all the literature! So it's quite amazing the things the Lord has done in opening the doors there.