



Gribbin's Grapevine

August 2009

Greetings to our Churches and Friends who pray and give!

This is our first prayer letter written on French soil since our return from our first year-long furlough. Time, and a new perspective on ministry, as we are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5), might make a difference now.

At the time the furlough started, my attitude about reaching the French was glum at best. I really thought our time was up and I sought the Lord about other possible ministries, but He gave us no new direction. He brought us back to France to persevere with Him to reach the lost here.

In my devotions this morning, one verse brought together what the Lord has been showing me: *"So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory."* (Psalm 102:15) At this time, it doesn't appear that this is happening in French hearts, much less with the kings of the earth. But from now on, we're not trusting our feelings or appearances; we're looking to His Word and standing on His promises; for example, Isaiah 55:11 says, *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."*

We Persevere in the Gospel:

- To French military we know, like Stephane, whose Christian Brazilian wife is a faithful witness for Christ.



Joy and John

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- With military nurses (men and women), the Bible study continues on in September with Pastor Perez. Even some lost ones attend.

- Teaching men like *Samy* (muslim) and *Jean-Pierre* (Roman Catholic) who, though lost, still come every week for a Bible study at the Center.

- Reaching aimless youth like *Toto* and *Gary* who come just to play games at the Center.

Assisting Our French Pastors

Now that our church is in "good hands" with the French pastors and laymen doing the preaching, I am able to help French pastors in other churches in the region who have a big outreach. For now, this involves mainly Sunday services.

"Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him."

One of those pastors is *Didier*, a young French Baptist pastor in Marseille, who also has pastoral duties close by in Aix-en-Provence. He is also a missionary to the Jews, with an American mission, and is in the States from July 8 to Aug 17. That meant preaching the six Sundays in Aix during his time in the U.S., allowing us to stay in touch with French Christians, and share in their spiritual walk and witness.

Teaching Ministries

- Along with Didier in Marseille, the Lord is opening opportunities to teach the men of this region in a handful of Baptist churches. Like the laymen who teach in our church, the need in the churches here is for more qualified spiritual men who can *"teach others also"* as 2 Timothy 2:2 says.
- In October, the Baptist Bible institute in Algrange has invited me to teach a course in "The Spiritual Life."
- Another opportunity for teaching was discussed with *Vincent*, pastor of a growing Baptist church in Toulouse, who has developed their own Bible institute.

In all these opportunities, we need the Lord's direction and wisdom. This was one reason I believe my seminary training, while on furlough, was from the Lord: to help French Christians better reach their fellow Frenchmen with the Gospel of Christ.

Family News: One in Heaven and A New Name in Glory. . . Four words could tell the story here: "passed away" and "new life." Joy's father, *Milton McLallen*, passed away on June 29th, just two weeks after our return to France. Joy returned to Pennsylvania to be with her

mother and family. Though saddened, and missing him terribly, a new life came out of it: our son, *Joey* (25), trusted Christ as his Savior three days after the funeral! The Sunday evening after his grandfather's burial, Joey finally gave in to the Holy Spirit's conviction and opened his heart and life to Christ. Words can't explain our joy over his coming to Christ, but amid a few tears, we thank God for His grace to Joey, and for your prayers that he would be saved.

Prayer Request

We have just one request: ask God to give us people (military and civilians) who want to read the Bible with us. It's His Word that will begin to make the difference here, much more than our trying to explain the Gospel to them. The promise He has given is Psalm 119:130, *"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.* We **THANK YOU** for your fervent prayers in this regard.

As we close, thanking you for your faithful prayer and support, we share this verse from Psalm 105 that we read this morning: *"Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him."* It is about Joseph in Egypt (in Genesis). The word of the Lord "tried" or tested, Joseph. We're experiencing that here in France, His Word is testing our hearts as we take the Word - the Gospel of Christ - to Frenchmen. We need it and so do they. **THANK YOU for helping us get the "Word out" to them.**

In His grace,



John & Joey
Toulon, France