

SPAIN REPORT

May 2004

*** The hardest decision of my life ***

Some of you may remember that shortly after arriving in Spain in 1989, my father was poisoned by an over-the-counter sleeping aid known as "L-tryptophan". The body uses this amino acid (found naturally in some foods) to manufacture serotonin, which is why it has been a popular insomnia remedy. But my father's case had to do with a CONTAMINATED batch of L-tryptophan from Japan which produced a serious illness (Eosinophilia Myalgia Syndrome or EMS) in over 1,500 consumers in the U.S. and killed almost forty. The severe elevations of eosinophils (white blood cells) in my father's body released high levels of histamine and other allergic and inflammatory compounds. Since then, he has had to learn to live with severe muscle and joint pain, weakness, skin rashes, etc.

It has not been easy for me to stay in Spain, all the while knowing that my father has been sick. Only God knows the inner struggle that I have experienced throughout the years. I have desired to serve my parents as a small token of my appreciation for all that they have done for me... but at the same time have felt COMPELLED to remain in this country for the gospel's sake. My heart is divided! The fact that we love the brethren here and plan to reach more lost souls in the future has only intensified this feeling. Do we stay here or do we move back?

I have prayed many times about this matter, perhaps hoping to receive some kind of "providential sign" indicating which road to take. My understanding of God's providence recently changed after a good friend and brother reminded me that, instead of looking for "signs", we should allow God's Word to direct us when making important decisions. This comment (and others) encouraged me to reconsider the Bible's teachings regarding children's responsibility to their parents. 1 Tim. 5:4 reminded me that members of the Lord's body should learn "to show piety at home and to REPAY THEIR PARENTS; for this is good and acceptable before God" (NKJV). I also began to wonder if I have become somewhat like the Jews in Jesus' day who would evade their responsibility to their parents by saying, "anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God)" (Mr. 7:11). After more prayer and meditation, I've finally come to the conclusion that if I can be useful to God in New Jersey AND serve my sick father at the same time, then this is the most appropriate course of action.

In short, we are considering the idea of moving back to the US in the summer of 2005 (and perhaps earlier, if need be). Gardner Hall claims that there is more work for us in the NJ/NY area than we can imagine and that we will mostly likely have more classes with non-Christians than in Spain. (Gardner is the only fully-supported preacher working with two or three Spanish-speaking congregations in the area. At times he is not able to handle the work load by himself.)

Moving back to the US is not as easy as it sounds. We have adapted to the Spanish way of life and my children actually LIKE going to school every day. From a financial point of view, my present salary would not be enough to cover our expenses. To give you an idea about this, right now our mortgage payment is about \$500 a month and a full-coverage health insurance plan FOR MY ENTIRE FAMILY costs only about \$230 a month. (Insurance is a lot cheaper in Spain!) Similar housing and health insurance in New Jersey could cost us as much as \$2,500 a month, 70 percent of my total salary!

Before making a firm decision to move back, I need to know if those of you who support us in Spain would be willing to support me to preach the gospel in the NY/NJ area. I'd appreciate it if you could drop me a line at jerry@buscad.com and let me know what you think. Of course, we may decide to stay in Spain if my father leaves this life before we move back. Time will tell.

*** Brethren more active ***

The church in Dos Hermanas has been more involved in evangelism since I preached a pretty tough lesson on "Comfortable Christianity". I had spoken to them on several occasions about the need to make an effort at least once a week to reach people in the community, but there was no real change until now. Since my firm message, the brethren (myself included) have been handing out tracts and posting flyers in this town of more than 100,000 souls. The brethren in Seville continue to post flyers and hand out Bibles, but it is very difficult to get people to study with us.

*** Personal ***

I've have decided to make a trip to the US alone from June 11 - July 20 with the main purpose of helping my father. On June 2, surgeons removed half of his right foot due to gangrene. Please pray for my efforts. My parents and siblings are Catholic and I hope to have more opportunities to talk to them about the gospel. Thanks for your support and prayers!

Jerry & Maria Falk

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