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Winning Together! part 2

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15 New Disciples!

The Story of Our Home

By Angela (of Stephen), Rijeka, Croatia

How do you win disciples? That's a question that's not so easy to answer. To be honest, for many years in the Family I felt bad that I hadn't won many disciples. As time went on, I had my own kids to raise and train. That's when the Lord saw fit to put me in a Home whose primary goal was winning and training new disciples, and it became one of the most thrilling chapters of my life!

Over the past six years our Home has won 15 new disciples—and Jesus gets the credit for sure! Not everyone made it to full-time discipleship, but all received training they'll never forget. Quite a few are now serving the Lord in other mission fields. So here's our story!

I had to change

Stephen and I moved to Croatia in the summer of 1996. Personally, I was determined to just take care of my three youngest kids (12, 10, and 4 years old). I was recovering from a series of miscarriages, had just closed a big Home in Italy, was worn out, and generally feeling in need of "retirement" for a while. I didn't even want to be involved in shepherding, and just enjoyed being in a new situation, taking care of the kids and doing a little witnessing here and there.

At this time our work and witnessing pretty much revolved around bringing humanitarian aid to refugees, doing shows for them, plus running a Home full of young people. Not that it wasn't exciting, but after a while I came to a point where I knew in my heart something was terribly missing.

In March 1997, the day I turned 40, I wrote a special prayer on a little piece of paper, which went something like this: *Dear Jesus, am I really living up to my convictions? I was*

so full of ideals when I joined, but I feel something has been lost along the way. I long for Your Spirit and for a more radical life of discipleship!

Well, that very same year the Lord started answering my prayer. During a summer trip to Bosnia, Stephen and our band met Paolo, Stefano, and Marco in Mostar—three on-fire young people who were running a sort of live-out Home there. (See FSM 409, "The Best Trip," by Paolo.) Our two teams worked together for about a week doing shows and witnessing to the local youth. I was home taking care of the younger kids.

When our team came back I was so surprised to hear them shout "Halleluiah" and other strange joyful things like "Shondobarando!"—especially from some of our young people who had been more into other things. Hmm ... something new was in the air!

Our first disciples

Then I heard Marco wanted to join our Home! So he was our first disciple, a 20-year-old idealistic Italian boy. Since he already spoke English, a number of the young people in our Home were spending time with him, reading with him, etc.

I remember feeling quite awkward around him, like, "I'm too old. Let the young ones take care of him."

Then a couple of months later, Paolo also joined! Again, I was keeping to myself, also quite discouraged at the time with my difficulty in getting along with young people, including my own older teens.

Before Christmas Marco was called for military service in Italy, and when we saw him again at a fellowship we had in Italy for the

New Year, he shared a few disturbing things about maybe not joining when he returned. Wow, that was a shock for me! *Wait a minute! Were we maybe failing a new disciple?* Well, how would I have known anyway, as I wasn't spending any time with him, or with them!

My decision

What about Paolo? Was he also going to leave? All these questions were running through my head that night, and I couldn't find peace. Finally I opened my heart to the Lord and realized I had been fighting against something: My pride was keeping me from getting involved with these new disciples, availing myself also of all kinds of logical excuses—the kids, I'm too old, I can't relate, etc., etc.

I guess deep down inside I knew that something like that would require a big commitment and some radical changes in my life.

But thank God, I got so convicted at the possibility that Paolo would also leave, and then heard Jesus so clearly asking me: "Are you willing to lay down your life for him, like I did for you?" That's when I finally yielded and said yes to Jesus.

Well, that was only the beginning! Back home in Croatia, it dawned on me that Paolo didn't speak English at all and needed someone to translate the Basic Babes Course for him. As the only Italian/English speaker in the house, I reluctantly took the job. At first it was very embarrassing! Partly because I hadn't translated for a long time, and partly because we started off with some of the most radical Letters! Sadly, I must have forgotten the spirit of some of these through the years, so much that my bottle was getting broken in the process.

Thank God, Paolo was a very easy and hungry student, and so excited about anything we were reading!

Soon it got easier, and I actually started rediscovering the Word—it was almost like joining the Family again! The whole Basic Babes Course was preaching back at me,

and I felt so hypocritical. Besides, since I am Italian, this was the first time I had heard the Word in my own language. It was like traveling back in time, singing the songs that made the Revolution again, and even praying again in Italian, which, believe it or not, I hadn't been able to do any more!

Then another test came. When Stephen found out Paolo was a driver, he was so thankful, as up until that time he had had to do all the driving, including going in the van to Italy for pickups and fundraising. So he suggested I could go with Paolo.

Oh Lord, not this! I had seen it coming, already feared the idea, and again tried to find all kinds of logical excuses not to do it. *He's too young! What are the contacts going to think? He's too wild and not wise enough, and he's going to blow them away. Maybe he's not even a safe driver!*"

Finally I went for an overnight trip to Italy with Paolo as the driver, and that's when things started changing. On the way back we talked all night. I shared my testimony and finally realized that these new disciples actually liked us FGAs! That helped me to get over my mental block!

More and more

Soon afterwards Stefano joined also, along with Enrico. The two of them are now serving the Lord in Turkey, while Marco did rejoin and ended up in Africa.

Pretty soon these new disciples started changing our Home, even our free days! It was so much fun! I even stopped watching videos and instead had inspiration and Word time with them! There was a lot of giving, but also a lot of receiving.

God bless Paolo, who went from being a babe to a shepherd of new disciples practically overnight! That's when it pays to win some labor leaders. Actually, besides the training he had already received in Bosnia in a semi-live-out situation, Paolo's great passion in the System had been to be a mountain guide and,

besides climbing all sorts of mountains, he had received some good training from top mountain guides working professionally in rescue teams.

I had a chance to meet and witness to one of them, who told me how Paolo had so much potential to become one of them, have a good career with lots of money, etc., and how much they missed him, even though they respected and admired his choice. So I told him: "Well, thank you for the training you gave him. Now the Lord is using him to help others climb His mountain!" And God bless him, this guide fully understood that, and even got turned on to the Letter "Mountain Men"!

Around this time Bulgarian Maggie joined our Home. She had been a catacomber for a few years before joining, and then moved to the Home in Split about a year earlier. God bless her, she became one of the pillars of the Home and has been overseeing the outreach and the training of our sheep for years, along with Stephen and Jennie (my SGA daughter, a single mom).

Next there was Francesco! He was only 15 when we met him, raised in an FM Family, but with hardly any concept of the Family. He was involved in drugs when we met him at a fellowship we organized in Northern Italy. Stephen and I were about to leave when he came to our van, and with pleading eyes asked: "Can you take me to Croatia?" We could hardly refuse!

While he didn't come with us right then, a month later he came for a visit, and explained a bit more how he didn't want to end up like his older brothers, all three of them having serious problems with drugs and alcohol, to the point of ending up in psychiatric clinics. Poor kid, he was quite scared, and at the same time attracted to spiritual things.

Francesco's hunger for the Word and Paolo's faithful training kept him through many battles and growing tests. He was like a little sheep following Paolo everywhere! (A few months ago, Francesco moved to a Home in the Ukraine.)

It was around this time that I started going on fundraising and follow-up trips with our new disciples, and discovered what an asset they were. This caused a total revolution in our fundraising methods and laid the foundation for our larger follow-up ministry. (See our testimony, "A New Path," in FSM 396.)

Our own shake-up

Around this time we also realized we needed to have a shake-up in our Home (before the actual Shake-Up 2000), as other new disciples were joining and we had to have a better spiritual standard. In a way we were forced to become somewhat of a Babes Ranch. Even though a bit painful, this process actually strengthened us and the young people who decided to remain, as we and they then started becoming real shepherds and disciple winners. Some of them are now serving the Lord elsewhere, but thank you, Fleur and Jonathan particularly, for going through those rough times and for all the time you spent with our babes!

Actually, some of our own children were instrumental in the training of our new disciples. Can you imagine an 11-year-old boy (Mark), taking a 22-year-old new disciple (Paolo) up a hill, giving him a class on hearing from Heaven and praying with him for the gift of prophecy?! And it worked! Jonathan (16) would stay up many nights listening and encouraging quite a few babes going through withdrawals and having bad dreams. Jonathan was our "night guard," and we could always count on him to take over when some of us were finished for the day!

And there was Jennie, having to train a few of them in the kitchen, and putting up with some incredible situations!

Winning Andrea

So now we were getting ready for a new, amazing challenge: Andrea, whose testimony is in this FSM (page 7). He was a real tough case, lost in the world of drugs, crime, and

Satanism. He is Francesco's older brother, and here's a testimony on the power of prayer: For a long while, every morning Francesco would ask the Home to pray for his brother, as he was so concerned about him. So we kept praying, even though sometimes we felt, "Here we go again—the same prayer request!"

One day during a trip to Italy, Paolo, Isaac (YA), and I stopped by to see this famous Andrea (a.k.a. Pingui). His parents were quite desperate about him, and his mother pitifully showed us his room. It was a real pit, so black with demonic posters and smoke we could hardly enter. At the time Andrea was out with his friends and came back the following morning.

The next day, late morning, Andrea finally got up and we met him. I'll never forget the first hug we gave to this amazing kid, with long dirty hair, long black nails, and ... I won't say more. But he gave us a sincere warm hug and was interested in talking, so after overcoming our initial fear and apprehension, we socked it to him with heavy songs like "Traditional Chains," and the drop-out/Endtime message.

Andrea knew about the spirit world—more the dark side of it—and when talking to him we could almost feel the battle in the spirit going on over him.

After this short meeting, we came back home, but kept praying for Andrea, thanks to Francesco's reminders. A month or so later, we passed by Andrea's home again, and again he was out, but ... something was different. We went into his room, and this time we found nature posters hanging on the walls, replacing the demonic ones! His parents confirmed that things were changing, and they could hardly believe it.

A month later, Andrea came to visit us for a couple of days with his father and a friend. This time things got even deeper. We had a long spirit trip with him by the beach. (Because some of these new disciples were particularly interested in the spirit world, one of their favorite activities was getting together and after

a few songs and pumping in the Spirit, taking off and visiting Heaven, for example. Asking the Lord for visions accompanied by prophecy has been a good and safe substitute for drugs!) Then he went witnessing, mainly passing out tracts to the people walking by the beach.

After a few more visits, Andrea decided to join for good, and his life transformed before our very eyes! Helping him to make it was, like in the Letter "Pawn," a real teamwork effort, down to seven-year-old Jeffrey who was on his case daily about giving up smoking.

How we all changed

A lot of us had to give up other things in order to help win these disciples: free time, activities which wouldn't have been appropriate, even video nights! We had to gear Home life and even witnessing to the needs of our sheep, and we definitely couldn't go on business as usual, or we probably would've stumbled and lost them.

To other Family members passing through at times, our Home seemed inspiring and on fire, yes, but extra strict. We did have to cut alcohol consumption almost completely for solidarity with these new disciples who all had drinking problems.

For them, video nights were boring, as they reminded them too much of the System. Instead we had lots of inspiration nights and yes, spirit trips! Many of them chose to avoid going to play pool at a bar on a W&R day, as they felt it would have been a drag on their spirits and temptation for some of them. We banned System music in our Home, and limited other unedifying conversations or trips.

After Andrea joined we had three more disciples who joined for various periods of time, and then decided to either go FM or remain friends, besides a few young people who wanted to become CM from FM status. Then came another challenge: Simone (now Filippo)!

Filippo was met and won to the Lord by a sweet FM couple in Italy, Davide and Marie Claire, who later introduced him to us. (See his testimony on page 10.) After a period of about a year, he joined our Home. He was definitely a brand-new babe who needed instruction and shepherding. By now, Andrea had grown up enough to be an older brother and take him on the road witnessing.

By the way, if you wonder who Andrea

Activated is, well, that's our Andrea—a real on-fire salesman of the Word, so determined and full of faith that no one can resist! Thanks to these on-fire new disciples our Home was able to be second on the shiner list for *Activated* subscriptions last June.

They are wonderful, dedicated young people who changed our lives and our kids' lives, and are always teaching us something new every day!

Real Freedom

By Andrea Activated, Croatia

I would like to tell you how the Lord turned my life right side up.

I'm Italian, 24 years old, and have 7 brothers and 2 sisters. My parents were FM ever since I can remember, and since I was small they told me Bible stories and Grandpa stories. Until I was six we kept moving houses; many times we lived on the far outskirts of civilization. One day my dad told me that my grandmother and uncle wanted to kidnap us for being in the Family, so that's why we were always on the move. One time they were coming to get us, but on the way they had a bad car accident.

When I was seven, we stopped moving, my dad got a job, and I remember I didn't go out witnessing with him anymore. I started attending System school, and that's where I learned tons of bad words and got influenced by the wrong examples.

At 12 I tried smoking cigarettes, at 14 marijuana. I remember even bringing it to school. I became part of the worst element of the whole school, always being rebellious against any kind of system.

I started wearing raggedy and worn-out clothes. Often I got thrown out of school for quarreling with the teachers and the school

director. I flunked a few times and couldn't even get an eighth-grade diploma.

At 15 I started working, and on the weekends I would go drinking with my friends, thinking that the way to be happy was by smoking and taking drugs. With my friends I even got involved in vandalism, breaking shop windows and street signs, and turning cars upside down.

My look, in the meantime, had gotten worse: I started wearing long, long earrings, chains everywhere, and had long black nails. I just wanted to be the most different and revolutionary of all!

One night I had an accident on my motorbike that left quite a mark on my life. I guess I had a near-death experience: I felt like I was floating above my body, moving up. Then I saw my whole life, like watching a movie, and felt incredibly beautiful sensations. I didn't know what was happening. Then I saw my friend coming back with another bike, and right then I stopped floating upward and realized I was dead. I could see everything that was happening: my body lying on the ground, my friend helping me come back to life. I think everything must have lasted just a few minutes. This accident didn't really bring me

closer to Jesus, but it got me curious about the spirit world.

At 17 I became a heavy metal fan. The priest in our town would come by to try to "redeem" me, but ever since I turned 14 I had been disgusted by the hypocrisy of the church. His visits drove me even further away from Jesus.

I started taking stronger drugs and selling them to be able to make some money, as everything I had was getting spent on drugs and alcohol.

I think the years between 16 and 19 were the worst of my life. I changed jobs eight times and I couldn't keep one for more than seven or eight months. Each time I'd think: *There must be a different kind of life. How can this be called life? Being always in chains? I'm sure there's a life with real freedom and I'm going to find it.*

By this time I had gotten into witchcraft, worshipping Satan, and I had a type of the gift of prophecy without realizing it, only it wasn't from the Lord, but from the dark side.

I spent my summers traveling around and living like a bum on the street, sleeping on the sidewalks, stinking of alcohol and smoke, sometimes covered in my vomit and some dog's shit. I'd search for food in the garbage, beg, and couldn't care less about what people thought of me. I was just searching for freedom and following my heart.

Then one night, while listening to a song by Iron Maiden, in the mirror in my room I saw a spirit flowing by, a beautiful woman with long black hair, wearing a grey veil. I had already talked to her during some séances and knew she was a demon. From that moment on she followed me everywhere, telling me what to do. One day I bought a book on witchcraft and started seriously studying it, trying to create my own sect. I started doing some rituals and ordering this demon to do certain things, which she did! But I was her slave.

Then I went through a stage where I'd go off to the mountains trying to find mushrooms I could smoke. I liked nature also. Every weekend I'd take my motorbike and drive about 90 km without lights, and in the beginning even without a tent, and stay there overnight all alone, 1500 meters (5,000 feet) high.

Around that time my brother Francesco joined the Family and started praying for me faithfully every day.

One day I was observing a tree and told myself: *Something I like about God is His creation.* I couldn't believe I thought something like that, but it was as though deep inside I knew there was a God. I had received a solid foundation from my parents when I was very small. The minute I said that, I felt a strong loving Spirit come down and enter me, filling me completely with joy!



On the road to Zadar pushing *Activated*

I started noticing the colors around me and all the little things. But my search wasn't over yet, because when I came down from the mountain, that wonderful sensation disappeared. I got deep into depression, bound to this demon whose purpose was to drive me to self-destruction through alcohol, drugs, and the strong hate that was building up in my heart.

My brother would write me every once in a while and tell me about Jesus, even though I really didn't want to hear about it. When he came to visit me, and when the others from the Family came to visit me, I could see they were bursting with joy.

One day I was particularly bored and depressed and feeling like I had reached the bottom. I was hitchhiking with my best friend and nobody was picking us up, so I lifted my eyes towards the sky and said: *Jesus, if what my brother told me is true, if You really exist and are more powerful than Satan or anybody else, change my life or I'm going to kill myself.*

One day, while taking the day off work due to sickness, I was out walking when an old lady asked me to help her cross the street, and so I did. She thanked me with a simple smile, and it changed my whole day. It gave me so much joy, that right then I realized I was supposed to start helping others. That was one step towards my conversion.

I started becoming a new creature! Shortly afterwards I went to visit my brother in Croatia for a couple of days, with my dad. I was so impressed by the love everyone had for each other.

On the way home we stopped by to see some other Family members and there I met a sister (Mary Mom), who told me that soon I was going to face a big battle. That same night I had the worst spiritual experience while sleeping, with various demons trying to take control of my mind and body. At one point I couldn't even scream for help, but I remembered something my brother had given me to



Andrea on stilts and Filippo below

read from *Treasures* about fighting the Devil. It said that the Devil feared praise, so with all my strength I started praising the Lord and calling for His help, shouting, "Halleluiah! Thank You, Jesus! You are wonderful, Jesus!" Finally, the Devil couldn't take it and ran! What a relief!

I had other similar attacks for over a year, even after I joined, but they became less and less strong all the time, till I got completely cleansed from my past.

The next day I destroyed all the witchcraft symbols I had!—And then I started witnessing! But I was still smoking marijuana; I couldn't stop. Then one night I was with some friends, and after drinking and smoking, I started hearing the voices of demons again, screeching so bad that I got such a headache and couldn't



Andrea (first on top row, left) after he joined, on his first trip to Bosnia with Jonathan (next to him) and Lara. (Bottom from left:) Sean and two refugee friends

take it any more. That was the last time I drank and used drugs.

Now I couldn't stop talking about Jesus, and started distributing tracts and posters everywhere. Many of my friends thought I had gone completely insane and made fun of me, but I kept doing it and kept visiting my brother and the Home he lived in.

Then I was called for military service, and I knew that if they took me I would backslide, because I was still too weak. So I prayed that they wouldn't take me and, thank God, they discharged me!

Finally I joined the Family full time, and I'm still here, witnessing, pushing *Activated* and the tools and enjoying real freedom!

My Awakening

By Filippo, Croatia (written when he was Simone, a catacomber)

I spent three years of my life searching for an answer. Like a rubber ball I bounced around everywhere, not knowing where I would end up. What surprises the Lord had in store!

It all began in June 1997, when I fell in love with a girl from Brno, and with her departure I started my writing career. When I got into writing, I wrote what went through my head—mostly poems, thoughts—and I kept everything I wrote in a special diary. A very good friend of mine wrote at that time too. We had many deep conversations together, touching on all sorts of subjects. But in spite of the love I felt for this dear friend and that I had had with this girl, it wasn't the kind of love I was looking for.

On New Year's Eve 1998, I realized something had to change for me. I gave up my job,

thinking that I would be able to dedicate more time to writing.

As I went over what I had written in the past, I saw that the nice things I had written didn't come from me. It just wasn't me at all!—But I didn't have the slightest idea about where or from whom it came. Every once in awhile some of the things I wrote were positive, but most of it was just trash, to be thrown away. Who knows what kind of spirits I was listening to! I worked part time and met other writers, but they weren't the kind of friends I wished to have.

New Year's 1999 was a pretty weird celebration. Once again I really desired to change, but it was no use. I used drugs now. I had lost interest in writing and had immersed myself deeply in the System and its worldly ways. I began doing my civil service, in which my



Angela and Paolo while visiting Davide and MarieClaire's home, the second time they met Filippo (with hair band)

job was to take care of a blind man. My old friends didn't give me the kind of company I longed for, so I selfishly picked the friends I wanted to hang out with and excluded the ones that bothered me. Now I see I wasn't even near finding the love I was searching for so desperately.

I found a job as an electrician, but the pay was terrible, and to top it all off, I had to work 13 hours a day. The sacrifice was too great—there was no way I would continue working in such conditions! After three months of arguing with my parents about it, I gave up that job for a better one. I urgently needed to change, but when was I ever going to? New Year's 2000 came, and it was the same old story again—nothing new.

One day in mid-January I was feeling quite depressed and miserable about the way things were going for me, when suddenly I had the most wonderful vision. There were villages and cottages scattered across the earth's surface and a heavenly loving atmosphere everywhere. Was it some kind of dream?

In February I was working in another company, doing the same job, but this time it paid well. The relationship between my friends and I had grown stronger, but ... I knew that couldn't be all.

I bought a book about Buddhism and tried reading a few pages that, to my dismay, didn't give any real solutions. I listened to the CD that came with the book, which I felt was pure garbage. After all this I came to realize I was living a dull, meaningless, routine life.

Wait a minute! A new car—that was it! I wasn't cool enough! Then came the grand idea: two jobs! I ended up keeping my old job as an electrician, and began to work as a bartender in the evenings till 1:00 in the morning. That went on for three months, until I was finally able to pay some of the money I owed for the car, which had cost \$15,000. I told my parents, "Don't worry, I'll pay it. I promise I'll work hard for it." I needed a miracle desperately.

I hadn't stopped smoking, and because of this bad habit, I was downgraded to another department. It was no problem at all for me. My co-workers were nicer and work was lighter. I was perfectly fine with it.

October 2000: Now the company hired a new electrician to work with us. I met him one evening at the office where I was getting paid. The boss introduced him to me, saying, "This is Danilo and I want you to work out his coming here in the mornings, since you both live in the same town."

I said, "Yes, of course. I'm Simone." He looked at me with such a friendly smile that for a moment I thought he was just pretending



Personal witnessing during the summer

to be nice, like anyone else would. I thought, *What does this man want from me besides a daily ride to work?*

Pretty soon Danilo (Davide) was well known at work for his willing and joyful spirit. He talked about his past experience as a Christian volunteer, which for me still meant going to Africa and ... yeah, right! Oh, but how I wanted for him to come and tell me all about it! I had gotten tired of church six years before and had forgotten all about the Bible. There couldn't be any hope left for me, I felt. But I really wanted to change.

One day at lunch break in a restaurant he named a few Bible characters and asked those of us sitting there questions about them, to see if we knew who they were and what their stories were. Right away I showed off all I knew (or thought I knew) about the subject, only to find out that I had better shut up and listen carefully if I wanted to learn anything at all.

As we drove back to our workplace, Danilo kept talking to all of us, and quoted Revelations 13:18: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath

understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six." Some of the men were interrupting and making fun of him, but I was so curious and interested that I told them to be quiet. From that day on I had such good communication with Danilo, just like two brothers would. I could open my heart completely to him.

Once he was telling me about Jesus and God, and he told me that praying was something very normal to do. Just then the tears started to flow: It had been 15 years since the last time I had said even one word

of a prayer. The Lord started working in me pretty soon after I prayed to receive Jesus. At home I didn't argue with my family as much as I used to. I also started praying more and telling people about the Lord.

New Year's 2001! This was it! I smoked for the last time at 11:30 PM, TYJ! My communication with others had become much smoother, and I had become a loving person at home with my family. I started going back



Filippo with Andrea and his sister Virginia, at that time both in our Home



(L to R:) Andrea, Jeffrey (11), and Filippo getting ready for clowning

to church, but the priest wasn't as outstanding as I thought he would be. I suffered insomnia for the following two weeks and had terrible stomachaches all the time. I told Danilo that I frequently heard voices and was hit with visions from the wrong side. I had had enough of that! Lots of prayer and reading uplifting things from the Word helped me get strengthened in faith, and I got the victory! Hallelujah! TYJ!

*

(After being a catacomber in the Home of Davide and Claire [FM], in Italy, Filippo was introduced to the Rijeka Home and joined full time after about a year.)

Hi, everyone! I've been here in this Home in Croatia for about one year and nine months. During this time I learned so much: how the Lord supplies funds and other needs for the running of His Kingdom, how people grow through follow-up, how to keep things running in the Home, how all this requires patience, knowing that Jesus takes care of everything. Around the house I help with handyman work, particularly as an electrician, but also with gardening, cleaning, and sometimes cooking.

The Lord wants me to be more humble, so He's teaching me lessons on receiving correction, working more with others, and resting in the Lord. I've been learning lessons on love, humility, and brokenness.

I have gone on many faith trips and each time I have learned new things about working in teamwork, and how to trust the Lord through others as He's ultimately in control of everything. I made most of my trips with Andrea, Paolo, and Angela in Italy. Andrea taught me a lot about pioneering, provisioning, getting out the Word, and finding new contacts and sheep. From Paolo and Angela I have learned lessons on humility, slowly feeding the sheep, staying in the Spirit, being a blessing to the work, and abiding in my calling.



Filippo (with poster) visiting a refugee family in Karlovac with Paolo, Angela, and his favorable parents

Together with Andrea I'm also involved in a regular ministry of clown therapy, also involving some sheep and other young people met through personal witnessing. Besides helping them feel the thrill of making someone happy, it also provides some good training in witness-

ing for them. I'm doing outreach full time and pushing *Activated* everywhere and I'm having a lot of fun! The Lord never stops amazing me and working in mysterious ways.

Please pray I'll become the man the Lord wants me to be!

Winning New Disciples in Mozambique

By Martin (of Mercy), Mozambique

Word and witnessing

We have had many young people who showed interest in knowing more about the Bible and our way of life. Some we would meet outside the Home at first, others we invited straight to our apartment, depending on the individual and how we felt led concerning them. Some of these young people were church Christians, and we soon found out that they were mostly interested in getting fed rather than becoming disciples and feeding others. They would come over for the songs or inspiration, but weren't interested in going out witnessing. These didn't last long, and stopped coming after a while.

The ones we now have as disciples, including our outside witnesses, weren't churchy kids for the most part, and we introduced them to witnessing from the very beginning. By doing this, we knew that our time was being well spent, as we could see that they were interested in witnessing and helping us with our work—they were worth the time we were going to invest in them.

We had a lot of other students visiting in order to get to know us better, or who came to watch *Countdown to Armageddon*, as the youth here are very interested in the Endtime.

We met Daniel out witnessing when we first opened a Home in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. He showed great interest in

what we were doing and in the lit we were distributing. After we had witnessed to him for a while, he wanted to know how he too could become a missionary and join our group. We made an appointment to meet him in a park to read together and check him out more. After that I, Martin, started meeting him almost daily and read with him from *Treasures*, *Growing in Faith*, *Growing in Love*, and some Family statements. I taught him from the book of Acts and started reading to him from the Babes Basic Course. After a month of meetings and feeding, Daniel joined. That was in mid 1999. He has now moved on to the mission field of India.

We met Marcos when he was just 14, and he asked us from the beginning if he could join and travel with us. We invited him to come over for English and Word classes, to go out witnessing with us, and to help with our CTP. He fellowshipped with us a lot, since he was our next-door neighbor. We started him on the Babes Basic Course, as well as others who showed potential as disciples.

By the time this set of new disciples joined—Marcos, Esther, and Simon—they had read most or all of the Babes Basic Course and other publications, *Get Activated* booklets, and *Activated* magazines. Marcos joined after we had known him for three years, when he was 17; Simon joined two years later as he was finishing high school. Simon had been



Some of our Mozambican national disciples: (L-R) Daniel, 27, almost 5 years in the Family; Marcos, 19, outside witnesser for 3 years, now in the Family for over 2 years; David, 19, Family member for 1 year; Simon, 20, faithful outside witnesser for 2 years, joined as a new disciple in November 2003; Joel, 15, an outside witnesser for 1 year; Marisa, 22, outside witnesser and new FD member.

witnessing from the time we started giving him Word classes, and he started helping with CTPs and clowning at parties. When Simon joined, he continued reading the priority list for new disciples' first year in the Family, since he had finished the Babes Course before joining.

We first met Simon when we were visiting the Anglican rehabilitation center that was close to our Home. We would bring them provisioned food, clothing, etc., and we witnessed to all the boys, leading them to Jesus. We didn't consider most of the boys potential disciples, but Simon was different as he was sharper, had his act together, and was hungry for the Word. When he got thrown in prison (he was falsely accused of stealing a tape recorder), I went to visit him there and listened to his story. I then went back to the Anglicans and explained what had

happened according to Simon. The head of the center then withdrew his complaint to the police, and Simon and some other boys were released just before Christmas.

Simon was expelled from the center, however, and didn't have the funds to continue his high school studies. As a Home we then decided to pay for his tuition, schoolbooks, and transport, which we did for two years until Simon finished high school and then joined the Family full time. During these two years he came over regularly for classes and to go out witnessing with us.

Esther was very interested in our work and mentioned she wanted to become a missionary, asking from the very beginning if she could join. She would come over for classes and go out witnessing with us, which she enjoyed as she has good communication skills and makes friends with people easily. Then after a couple of months, after finishing the reading list for prospective new disciples in the Charter, she joined for the 20-day trial period. She was bored with her job, unhappy with the situation she was in, and the Family gave her the love, security, and stability she needed. (Please pray for her, as it seems that she has a case of chronic malaria. We're getting some counsel from a specialist to see if she can rid of it. There's a new medicine, which seems to help to get rid of this type of malaria in some cases.)



Martin and Mercy, Mozambique

Esther's dad is from a Hindu background, while her mom has an Indian Muslim background, mixed with African blacks. Both her parents were converted to Christianity. Lots of people of Muslim Mozambican background are converting to Christianity.

Issues

Though there has never been official "apartheid" in this country, there is social racism at least, as most of the blacks belong to the poorer 80% of Mozambicans that live below the poverty line.

When the Portuguese colonialists left Mozambique, they hadn't trained the population to take over their jobs. There was barely any infrastructure outside of Maputo. According to President Joaquim Chissano, there wasn't even one Mozambican who owned a corner store or a taxi; there were no doctors or teachers. So the Mozambicans had to depend on others to come to their rescue. The Indian Muslim population now controls all the small- and medium-sized businesses, and are very condescending towards the blacks. And the blacks resent them.

There are a lot of white missionaries and Western NGOs trying to help the poor, and the Mozambicans are dependent on these organizations on one hand, or they follow the other alternative and work for a minimum salary for the disliked or hated Indians. Some Mozambicans have their own businesses now, but not that many.

So there is a gap between the foreigners, the Indian community, and the majority of the poor Mozambicans—creating a social apartheid. When witnessing to the Mozambicans we have to show them from the very beginning that we're very different from other religious organizations, and we have to communicate on their level.

When we have Mozambicans visiting and joining, it has been very important from the very beginning that our children made the newcomers feel at home and welcome. We wanted them to know that we didn't consider them different, and we weren't above them in any way because of a difference in color or culture. Our children have actually treated them like their flesh brothers and sisters.

The Mozambicans need lots of encouragement. When winning people over, it has been necessary to spend a lot of time teaching and



Martin at Maputo Central Hospital

communicating with them on a personal level, showing interest in their lives, and making sure they made steady progress. Memorization and reading the Word regularly has been a key element in their growth. They're spiritually sensitive people, readily communicate, and usually aren't shy when you approach them. Treating our visitors with love has helped them to come back for more.

Bringing them in

Before studying the Word and going witnessing with the new prospective disciples, we would often invite them to the Home to watch *Countdown to Armageddon* and explain the Endtime and the shortness of time before Jesus' return. People here are very interested in Endtime prophecies.

Over time we find out how hungry a person is for the Word, and after they are saved we see how much they want to help their fellow countrymen get to know Jesus. We get involved with the most interested, find out more about them and their backgrounds, and invite them over to our Home for classes, fellowship, get-out activities, and meals. When the potentials are underage, we invite their parents over to get to know us, and then we explain our work to them.

As a Home we pray about the visitors who come over and decide together when we'll start feeding them the heavier doctrines from the Words of our prophets. The potentials comment how they like Dad's language and how he socks it to the System and the churches, and how they like the teachings of Mama and Peter because they touch their hearts. When we start reading the meatier Letters with them, we start seeing a big change in their attitudes and spirit. We tell them about the Law of Love and our sex doctrines, which most of them like from the start. The Mozambicans are very



(L to R:) Simon, Marisa, and Alisa (Martin and Mercy's daughter) with a young friend

free sexually, and it takes discipline for them to forsake some of their freedoms and live within the boundaries set by the Charter. For example, one of our first national disciples had some trials with our sex doctrines and the LOL guidelines in the beginning, but when he actually practiced the sexual side of the LOL, he was sold on it 100%!

Update, March 2004

We have another potential disciple who comes over to our Home—Joseph, born in Kenya of a Kenyan mother and a Mozambican father. We first met Joseph almost five years ago, when he was finishing high school. After he finished his studies he worked at various jobs. He visited us off and on, and sometimes came over for Word studies, but even though he didn't visit regularly, he mentioned that he too wanted to work for Jesus. He got to a point where he was fed up with his job and with being used by the System, and became desperate to drop out. He's coming over almost daily, goes out on outreach with us, and studies the required Word for new disciples. His father and others of his relatives are members of Parliament.

Why I'm Here

By Daniel (27)



I am Mozambican, born and raised as a Muslim; my whole family is very staunchly Muslim. Upon finishing my studies at the age of 19, I decided that I wanted to travel to the capital of Mozambique, Maputo, and find a job.

The first job that I got was at a Christian rehabilitation center for people with problems with alcohol and drugs. While working there the Lord really touched my heart, seeing all the young teens from various rich families who had ruined their lives and the lives of their parents through both alcohol and drugs. At the same time I started having questions about life, such as why there was so much suffering in the lives of these young people and others that I could see around me. I was searching for the truth, and was no longer satisfied with what the Islamic faith had to offer. And so that's when I turned to the Answer Man—Jesus! I found the answers and peace of mind that I was searching for in Him and in His Word. Thank the Lord! And so I decided to drop the Islamic faith and follow Him.

When my parents found out, they went through a lot of trials about it. I was their favorite son, and they just couldn't believe that I could do something like that. This made things quite difficult between us at first, but in time they learned to accept my decision.

Working for two years at the center was overall a good experience for me, and taught me valuable lessons that will remain with me for the rest of my life. However, I got tired and discouraged because some of the young people were not fighting to make progress at all, and I was seeing the same people over and

over because of this. At this point I wanted to do something more than just helping these people with their addictions; I wanted to win souls and to give my all to the Lord in this way. And so when I met and got to know the Family, it was an answer to my deepest prayer.

But back to where I was, at the Christian center: Because I was doing so well, they would send me on trips to help centers in other African countries. Upon returning from one of these trips, while preparing for a trip into Angola, I met the Family at the local shopping mall. There were three of them postering, and they gave me "What Everybody Needs Is Love!"

I read a bit of it and was very touched by the message; so I turned and asked how I could contact them to find out more about the Lord and the message that they were giving. They explained to me that, as they had only been in the country for three days, they were still looking for a house, and were staying at a hotel nearby. It happened that the hotel where they were staying was very close to my office, and so I invited them to come and talk with me more there about themselves and their work. This was the beginning of a whole new life for me, and one month later I dropped everything and joined full time.

What most impressed me upon meeting the Family members was their happiness and their sweet, caring spirits. I felt the Lord's love shining through them, and could not resist the pull.

Upon joining, it wasn't strange at all for me to be living with foreigners, as at the center I had also been working and living with foreigners. Also I had grown up with a half-brother who was mixed, as my mother had been married to a Portuguese man before meeting my dad.

I believe that the reason why other African Blacks don't join as easily as the Mozambicans is because of their background, but I also believe that if you are a sincere and good example to them, and really care for them so that

they can see and feel God's love through you, then that will be the key to winning their hearts and lives for the Lord and His service.

I've been in the Family for around five years now, learning and growing in the Lord and His Word, doing my best to love and serve Him, and to help others find the joy of doing the same. Even though at the beginning I had many ups and downs, over time I've found such great happiness in following Jesus full time that I now know it is the only thing I want to do with my life, and I am so thankful for His loving care that brought me to this point. He's done so many miracles for me already, and has now brought me to New Delhi, India, where I've been learning lots of lessons and getting good training on the field here, which I believe the Lord expects me to use in the future in my own field of Africa.

If the Lord could use and bring me this far, then I believe that He can certainly use any other African disciple to do the same. God bless all of you who are out there bringing in more of us African disciples. I can testify to all of you that it is worth it, and that's why I'm here today.

My Unspoken Prayer

By Marcos de Jesus (19)



It was in 1999 that I first met the Family when a missionary couple moved into the apartment next to ours. I met Martin on the stairs, where he began to talk to me about Jesus, gave me

the verse Rev.3:20, and I accepted the Lord. It was very different for me because I am from a nominal Muslim family. I felt a change in my life from that moment on.

Before I met the Family, my life was not very happy because although I did the normal things that everyone else did, I felt that something was missing in my life. It was difficult sometimes, because my parents didn't get along well, we really struggled financially, and didn't always have enough food. Often I was very sick with asthma, and I had lost interest in my schooling. I didn't even finish my 9th year.

When I met the Family members I felt that they were an answer to my unspoken prayer to fill the emptiness I felt. The African way is that the mother does all the work around the house and everyone else does nothing, so when I saw the way the Family lived, everyone working together, it impressed me. At first I would come over to read the Word with them and to study English. The first book that really impressed me was *Life with Grandpa* because each story taught me so much. I was very shy and had many fears at first, and didn't enjoy witnessing or going with them to the hospital to pray with the sick in the beginning.

It was about two years later, with the confusion at home and after quitting school, that I felt that instead of doing nothing, I should serve the Lord and obey Mark 16:15. I was quite young, and the Home was full at the time, so I was afraid to ask if I could join. It was then that I had the opportunity to travel up to Beira for a month, as that Home had only one person at that time and he needed help. It was a type of test for me, but I liked it. When I came back from that trip, I joined the Home here in Maputo.

Even though there were big differences in culture and color, this really didn't matter and I was happy to live with these foreigners because I felt that what is important is the heart. There was also already a Mozambican disciple, Daniel, who helped me not feel too out of place.

Now, after being in the Family two and a half years, Jesus has changed me a lot, especially spiritually. I feel a hunger for the Word, my many fears are gone, and I'm healthier—I

never had those serious asthma attacks again. Also I've learned to be a bold witness and enjoy leading others to receive the Lord. I had the opportunity to live for one year in other African countries in the Family, which was a good experience in learning to adapt to different situations and cultures; but what I most enjoyed in each situation was the witnessing and outreach—that is what I like the most.

For the Rest of My Life

By Marisa (22)

I've known the Family for less than a year, so I'm new and just joining the Family. In previous years, I wasn't very happy, as I felt there was something missing in my life, even though I had friends and went out to discos and parties. I didn't know what was missing. I was so shy and fearful that even my mother and sisters would say I needed to get out of myself and enjoy life more. In



the city where I lived, everyone was in their own world.

That's when I dropped out of the Catholic Church and joined an evangelical church. I started praying to God to help me be happier. I thought I would be happier visiting this church, but my faith was low. When I met the Family, I felt attracted to them, as they treated me so special and gave me the attention I needed.

When I first met the Family, I thought this was another religious group that only talked about Jesus, but when I got to know them better, I saw that they were different. They were giving their whole life to Jesus and had more faith. A song I really like is "One Day I Took an Honest Look." It is like my heartcry, written especially for me.

I wanted to join the Family, as I felt it was God's calling for me. When I went out witnessing, it made me feel happy, and so I decided this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

In the beginning I thought it strange that someone from the West would live with Mozambicans, as a lot of foreigners are racists and would not want to live with Mozambicans. Normally, when a black lives with whites, the black is a domestic servant, and the white person wouldn't hug or kiss the black. But in the Family it's so different, as people from different nationalities and color can live in true loving harmony together.

In the beginning when I used to go out witnessing with the FGA men, I was very conscious of what people would think. Here in Mozambique there are lots of older European men who go out with young black Mozambican girls, courting. Sometimes these older men also marry these young girls, but I was concerned that people would think that I was going out with older men to get something out of it. But now I don't care what people say or think, and I'm just interested in what Jesus wants to do in my life.

I'm so much happier now. I used to have lots of nightmares, but Jesus did the miracle

and I have no more horror pictures at night. I was also afraid of the opinions of others, and Jesus is setting me free from that too. I know that Jesus loves me, and I don't have to worry about the opinions of others.

No Better Place

By Simon (20)



I met the Family four years ago, in 2000, and joined at the end of 2003. I didn't belong to any religion, but was living for five years in an Anglican center for boys. [Note from Martin: Simon's dad died when he was young. His mom took him to this center, as she had a hard time taking care of all her kids after her husband died. The center

paid for Simon's school and took care of his food and other expenses.] Those at the center never even witnessed to me, but I got saved when the Family started visiting this center. I wasn't very happy at the Anglican center, but after I met the Family my life started changing.

When there was some trouble at the center and I was falsely accused and thrown in prison together with some other boys, the Family came to my rescue and got me out. I thought, *Why would these foreigners have such an interest in me, to try to save me?* From that time on, I started visiting the Family regularly and left the Anglican center. When I left the center, the Family paid for my tuition, books, transport, and other expenses for the last two years of high school.

I started having regular MO Letter studies and going out witnessing weekly. When I started witnessing, I realized there was something better than just living in the System, so after I finished high school, I joined the Family. What attracted me the most to the Family was how we actively witness to everybody we met. Seeing the desperate need when we were witnessing at the cancer hospital, seeing how much the people needed Jesus, it made me the happiest I'd ever been, to witness to them. I love witnessing to needy and receptive people.

One of my favorite MO Letters is "Let's Talk about Jesus," and the ones on how to answer intellectuals.

Stories were going around in Mozambique and at the Anglican Church that white Westerners would come to Africa to kidnap black kids and sell them in Europe, so you had to be careful when these foreigners started to distribute food and clothing, and watch out for the next step they could take. At the time the Family was distributing lots of food and clothing at this center. But when I started having classes with the Family I saw that this group was different than what others said or thought. Many NGOs and missionary groups are watched with a certain suspicion, and people are careful not to get closely involved until they start knowing you better. But I decided to give my life to Jesus and felt there was no better place than the Family to serve Jesus full time.

Jesus is changing my life, and I feel good about it. I'm still learning every day, as many things are done differently than what I was used to before. I used to have many girlfriends who I had sex with, go out to discos on the weekend with friends, watch horror movies, and do as I please. Now I have to discipline my life and forsake my independence. Please keep praying for me as I'm in my Egypt, and I don't want to be influenced by things of the past. I thank the Family and Jesus for changing my life.

Total Acceptance

By Esther (19)



I first met the Family when two members witnessed to me in the shop where I was working, and the same day I prayed and received Jesus. I've known the Family for two and a half years

and joined the Family for a year. For a while I was an outside witnesser, and now I have rejoined, and am full-time again.

I come from a strict Muslim background, but in the last few years both my parents converted to Christianity. I had frequented Muslim schools and received religious education in a mosque. I had to memorize from the Koran, and if I didn't learn fast enough, I was physically disciplined. At times I arrived at home crying after being disciplined, but my mom couldn't do anything about it because the religious teachers were always right. We had a strict dress code, and I had to cover up from head to toe, even in extreme heat, and I couldn't show my body, as that was sin.

I didn't like these strict rules. If you didn't obey you were going to be judged and you wouldn't make it to Paradise, but would have to suffer in Hell. When I visit my relatives now, they want me to adhere to their dress code, as it's a reproach to show your shoulder or expose other parts of your body. I wasn't happy with my way of life.

I joined because I liked the Family. They taught me lots about Jesus, and since I met them I have been the happiest I've ever been. When I first joined I was a little fearful about living with others of another color and culture, as here in Mozambique the population of Indian background, who are mostly Muslim,

are racists and look down on Mozambican blacks; everybody of a different religion is inferior to them. The Muslims say that the Christian religion is inferior to theirs and many see Christians as "enemy number one." They even taught me that the Christian religion came into existence a long time after that of the Muslims.

I wanted to be sure that the Family was going to accept me for what I was, and when I joined the Family it was so different from anything I had known before: I felt total acceptance, so much love and understanding. It was a total change of lifestyle to join the Family. People weren't screaming at me anymore, and they treated me with love and not aggressively. Before I met the Family I was often alone and fearful, but when I accepted Jesus I learned to love others and communicate better with others. I became more mature.

What attracted me to the Family was the love and attention I was given, and I also liked the kind of work the Family does. I wanted to do something different with my life, and the Family had it all. They were so different from other groups. There's no other group like the Family in Mozambique, and the people here need the message and sample.

So Much Happier

By Joel (15)

I met the Family over a year ago, and have been getting classes, going out witnessing every week, and helping with the weekly CTP at the hospital where we visit and pray for the sick. Lately I also have begun helping with clown parties on the weekends.

My relatives are from the Zionist Church. I never met my dad because right after I was born, my dad abandoned us and left for South Africa, never to return. I dropped out of the Zionist Church, as I don't like the churches anymore. My older brother, who used to come

over for classes and help with the witnessing, introduced me to the Family. What attracted me was that I could go out and witness to the sick at the central hospital, and that Jesus helped me to win many souls to Him. I like our Family music, which is very special, and I enjoy reading the Word.

My brother told me, "If you hang around a lot with the Family then you'll probably join them as well," and he was right—I'm going to join when it's the Lord's timing. I felt good around the Family from the very beginning. We're so different from the churches because we always go out witnessing, telling people about Jesus, and helping them with the things they need.

At my home we sometimes went through real struggles when there wasn't enough food, and sometimes all I had was a cup of tea before going to bed. But since I met the Family and got saved, not only my life changed but thanks to the Lord's blessing, conditions at home changed as well and we no longer lack basic food. The Family helps us with basic needs and pays my school tuition and books. But most of all, our faith has grown since we met the Family, and the Lord has blessed us in so many ways because we obey Him and read His Word. I'm so much happier now serving Jesus and helping others.



“Convinced I Would Serve Jesus”

By Joseph (24)



I grew up in Nairobi and studied there, but didn't finish high school in Kenya because my father decided to get into politics in Mozambique.

Back during the struggle against the Portuguese colonialists, he was involved in the fight for independence. Then when Mozambique was liberated, there was a split in the ruling party, a disagreement with some who set themselves up as the rulers, and my dad left for Tanzania and Kenya for political reasons.

When my family returned to Mozambique, I went to finish high school in Johannesburg, South Africa. After that, I returned to Mozambique and got a job.

When I first met Martin and the Family, I didn't join, even though I wanted to work for Jesus, because I had to resolve some personal problems with my family. I came over for visits when possible, but from the beginning I was convinced I would serve Jesus.

The first Family book I read was *Treasures*, and it was very inspiring, as it opened my eyes to what serving the Lord meant. I was given different classes from the Family publications. I like Dad's writings as he expresses himself very well, he's very different from the churches, and he tells the truth. I also received the *Activated* mag for a year: It taught me how to pray, how to speak with Jesus, how to overcome problems, and more about love. I enjoy witnessing and out-

reach very much and am thankful that now it's part of my daily life. I have made the decision now to follow Jesus all the way as He leads.

Prophets of the End!

By David Joaquim (19)

I first met the Family in Beira in 2000, when the brethren there were looking for someone to help them with their visas. They had come to my father, who is a pastor, to ask him to sign their papers. As the son of the pastor, I was very involved in helping with the music in the church, and my social life centered around the atmosphere of the church.

I was happy in the church where I had found Jesus, but after I got to know the Family I saw they had much more truth than



the church did. I felt deep in my heart that Jesus had something for me to do outside the church, and I wanted to win souls. The Word that I read with them and the idea of serving Jesus full time, 100%, and living by faith are what attracted me the most to the Family. The first day I put my hand on a *Treasures* book I ended up reading half of the book!

My first impression of the Family was that they were Prophets of the End who could teach others the truth. They came to our church and showed the *Countdown to Armageddon* video, and it really opened my eyes. After this, I felt that Jesus had a plan for me to be like them, and reach the world with the truth.

When I first joined the Home I was very excited, as I had never before experienced people living together in unity and love like they did. In my family sometimes we would go a week without really talking to each other. Also, being a pastor, my father was a bit proud and treated us sons more like servants and not with a warm type of love. Here in the Family they were hugging me, and we did everything together. At first I noticed the differences in color and culture, but soon that didn't make any difference any more, and I felt comfortable with them.

I've now been in the Family for one year. I feel like a different person, as I have learned that God's way is the way of humility and not pride. I have learned to get out of myself and think more about others. I've learned to let the Holy Spirit speak through me instead of being worried about what to say when witnessing, and I have more faith to speak up to the people I meet.

Even though I know there will be difficulties and things to learn on the road ahead, I don't want to go back, as there is so much to do in the short time we have until the AC takes over. Please pray for me that I can be the disciple that the Lord desires.