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Part Two

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Cover art by Sabine.

The crystals are like clusters of grapes, like ornaments around the pillar, like the entwining of a grapevine that winds around the pillar. The crystals are inseparably fastened to the pillar and glow simultaneously with the pulsations of the pillar! The pillar supports all those crystals, and they're glowing with the pillar's light, because they pulse with that same rhythm, that beautiful glow of colored light.

The darkness is all around and seems much larger than the light, and yet it can't overcome the light. It can't put out the light! It tries to surround the light and cover it, but it can't put it out because the darkness itself is destroyed by the light.

Anything that tries to stop or hinder or come between the crystal and the light and power of the pillar, is destroyed by even the light of each crystal! [The crystals] are irresistibly drawn to the light, and nothing can stop them! Nothing can prevent them! The crystals know exactly where the light is, and they're headed straight for the light, no matter what, and there's nothing the darkness can do to prevent them, although it sure tries!

—Dad, "The Crystal Pyramid" (ML #214:19,23,33)

Recommended reading for ages 14 and up. May be read to younger ages at parents' discretion.

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Happy to Be a Channel of His Light

By Jazmin (22, of Elias), Guatemala

My name is Jazmin and I'm from Costa Rica. My parents are Zadok and Esther. I lived in the Family in Mexico most of my childhood, but when I was nine we returned to Costa Rica, and shortly thereafter, left the Family.

Our life changed drastically: My parents worked, and my brothers and I went to public school, though my dad still gave us devotions when he could. We started to have a little contact with the Family in Costa Rica, and when I was 12 my older brother Jonathan* and I went on a road trip with one of the Homes. Afterwards I went and stayed for a month at one of the Homes. (*See Jonathan's testimony on page 9.)

When younger I was very studious and got high grades, but as I grew older, my level of behavior and dedication dropped, and I was often bored.

I started smoking, and became bitter towards my parents—and life in general. I wasn't reading the Word anymore (though I continued praying before bed at night and sometimes during the day). I was drifting away from everything that was important in my life, and I didn't even realize it.

In a lot of ways I lost the fear of the Lord, to the point where I went along with games which had to do with witchcraft, not even thinking twice about what I was doing. I didn't even think there was anything bad about it.

When I turned 14, I tried marijuana because I wanted to know what it felt like. I thought I had nothing to lose, since nothing was really important to me anymore. My older brother Jonathan sold drugs, so I had easy access. Although it didn't make me forget my problems, it made them not seem so important. At this time, I began getting bad grades in school, my relationship with my mother was horrible, and I constantly fought with my family. I was frustrated and disillusioned with life.

I got to the point where I was always smoking, and I didn't want to face life. My only goal was to turn 18 and leave my parents' house, because I never wanted to see them again. Each day seemed like an eternity.



When I was with my friends, I would get drunk and smoke marijuana, instead of going to school. My friends didn't study; they spent all day in the park skating, smoking, drinking, etc.

When I was at home, I stayed in my room listening to System music, which was another one of my addictions. I couldn't live or sleep without it. I felt like the music that I listened to helped me to relax and let go, but in looking back, I realize that it was manipulating me, changing me, distorting things, and contaminating my mind, heart, and spirit.

As time went by, I became filled with hate and bitterness. I was often angry, and I had a very explosive temper. The only things that came out of my mouth were foul and hurtful words.

I felt my parents were trying to destroy my happiness and well-being—whereas in reality they were only trying to help me, make me happy, and give me everything I asked for. My parents didn't know what to do with me or what to say to me. My little brothers tried to get close to me, but I rejected them and stayed alone in my room. My siblings had been very close

to me when they were small; I took care of them and I'd become like their second mother, but then I started treating them badly and rejected them. Despite this, they still loved me and wanted to be with me.

The situation with my mother improved a little when she got pregnant again, after a five-year break. She got very sick, and she and the baby almost died. I took care of the baby for a long while, caring for her at night and before school. Caring for my baby sister at least gave me a goal in life.

Still, I was full of fear, and I couldn't go to sleep without praying for the night. Sometimes I would hear my dad in the morning playing the guitar and singing Family music in the living room, and for some reason I'd get a lump in my throat every time I heard those songs.

My dad didn't work all the time, only when he had a house or building to remodel, so at times we had a lot of money and other times we didn't have anything, just enough for bare necessities.

As for my romantic life—if it could be called that—it wasn't all that great! After a few days of seeing someone, I'd get bored and send them packing. I felt badly for hurting people, but I felt like I couldn't help it. After a while I became very cold and unstable with almost everyone. That's what happens when your deeds are guided by impulses and emotions, and when you have bitterness in your heart—your emotions are very unstable and you only hurt yourself as well as those around you. Thank You, Jesus, that in the Family we have the Lord's guidance and we try to be led by love and humility and not by our impulses, or by selfishness and egotism!

Then one day I fell in love with one of the guys I had already dumped, but he was mad at me for rejecting him. We never set aside our pride and lack of communication to make things right. That broke my heart, and I became more and more frustrated. This boy had shown me true love and concern, but I realized it too late.

At that time, my dad had us attend some meetings at the Home nearby, and some time after this we went to meet some brethren who had just arrived. They had formed a singing team, and my dad was going to help by playing guitar for them. He asked me to go with him, and since I liked going out, and my dad and I got along pretty well, I agreed.

When we got to Bozra and Ruth's Home I went to the girls' room, and they were very friendly and seemed interested in me, like I was special to them. I felt a little out of place since I wasn't used to being treated like that. In the System many people are only nice to you if they need something from you, and it feels so false, but these girls were different.

After that, Felicia (Bozra and Ruth's daughter) followed up on me, calling me almost every day. I couldn't push her away because she was different from the girls I knew in the System. I didn't understand why she liked me.

Afterwards Felicia and Peace, another girl from their Home, started to visit me to give me Bible classes. Although I wasn't interested in the classes, I couldn't refuse because they were showing me real love and interest, and I needed that.

When I turned 16 they invited me to spend the night at their house to celebrate my birthday. So I went, and they made me feel so loved. Afterwards I went to celebrate with my friends in the System. The only girlfriend I had in the System (all the rest were guys) had a lot of influence on me and manipulated me,

telling me to lie to my parents and often getting me into trouble. On the other hand, I also influenced her a lot into taking drugs and drinking. I always wanted to be high, and she was the first one who tried to help me have a balance, although later she ended up worse than me.

I started going out with a new boyfriend, whose name was Harold. I didn't think this relationship would last long either, but the Lord had another plan. At that time I had new friends and worse influences, and continued smoking weed.

As time went by, I started to have health problems. The marijuana and alcohol poisoned my blood and damaged my lungs, liver, and heart. I was frequently sick, and spent a lot of time going to doctors. But any help the doctors and my parents' prayers were able to do, I wiped out with my bad habits, dangerous addictions, spiritual disease, and eating disorders.

I also wasn't eating, and would go for entire days without eating a bite. What my mom would tell me about it, didn't make any sense, until one day she left a GN on my bed with testimonies from girls who were anorexic ("Mama's Memos!—No. 11," ML #3253, GN 858). I wasn't accustomed to reading the Word, but because I was high at the time, the first thing I thought when I picked it up was, Cool—a story!

In spite of my condition at that time, the Lord helped me understand the message perfectly, and what I read was exactly what was happening to me. I was convicted to know that demons can make you think like that and that they want to kill you. Right then I got up and ate a plate of food. All this time I'd thought it was just me and my thinking, and that what I saw in the mirror was true. But this GN changed me in a lot of ways without me even realizing it. I even started to read a *Daily Bread* Letter every day.

At this time, I was still with Harold, and he wouldn't let me go out or be with my friends. I didn't understand why I was still with him, since I had never let anyone control me before. But the Lord put him in my path at just the right time when I needed to be rescued. He knew I needed someone to control me for my own good; I was so rebellious that nobody had been able to control me yet, so He gave me someone who would. Our relationship was not good; we both had strong characters and would fight a lot. Still, something kept us together.

Through all this time, I kept reading my *Daily Breads*, then I started reading other Letters. I was learning a lot and receiving a lot of answers to my questions.

One day Harold came to my house just as I was about to start reading. I asked him if he wanted to read with me for 15 minutes, so he did. It was the first time that we didn't fight. Afterwards, each time he came over I refused to even talk to him until we had read some Word together.

One day a Christian friend of my parents came to visit. Although he was churchy, he had a beautiful spirit and he was really nice. That day, he told me he wanted to pray for me, and I let him, because despite everything I had done I still had a fear of the Lord, and I didn't want to say no to a prayer.

After he prayed, he told me that I had spiritual lethargy. I asked him what that was, and he explained it is a power that covers your eyes so you can't see anything bad in the spirit. It puts you to sleep, closing your mouth so you can't stand up for your convictions.

I didn't understand much of what he said; it didn't seem real to me. But when he rebuked it, I felt an incredible and indescribable

freedom. He told me the music I was listening to was blinding me. Then he told me his amazing testimony (he'd been married many times, was a former drug addict, and had been in prison, etc.), and a revelation about the dangers of music. What he said convicted me, and although I couldn't explain it to myself, I became afraid to listen to that music and let bad spirits back into my life.

From that point on, I completely stopped listening to all System music. That night Harold came over with an MP3 player full of music, but I told him I had decided to stop listening to that type of music. I started listening to the Loving Jesus tapes. I went to sleep listening to those tapes instead of the radio.

In time, Harold started getting hooked on the Family, and he wanted to go to the weekly fellowship meetings, but I didn't want much to do with them. I only visited sometimes to see the skits and to get out a little bit.

I liked to go to Boz and Ruth's Home because the other girls were there (Felicia and Peace), and I got along well with them and even stayed a few weekends with them. Then Reyna and Kaila (from Japan) came to the Home and we became good friends.

Harold really liked the Family and was always kidding with me that we should join. I would tell him that I didn't want to, and joked that he should go if he wanted to. I did notice, though, that when I was in a Home I didn't smoke weed, which surprised me since I had tried to stop smoking lots of times, but I couldn't go even a day without it. At the Homes I visited, I felt at peace and I wasn't mad or frustrated, and I didn't need to smoke to forget anything.

Many things were changing for the better in my life. I didn't fight so much with Harold or my parents, and I wasn't listening to System music. I read the Word almost every day, and I felt more and more peace. But I always felt I was waiting for something—I just didn't know what it was. I felt I needed something.

One weekend, I stayed for two nights at the Home. While I was there, Abi told me that I was going to end up joining the Family. But I argued that I would never do it, and I left with my dad the next morning. Later that day, Harold and I went to have breakfast and something strange happened. I started to feel outside of myself, as though I didn't belong to Harold any more, even though I'd always felt tied to him and like I was his property. I told him that I might join the Family, and then we went

to my house and sat down on my bed to talk, but I still felt strange, like it wasn't my room, or my bed, or my family, that I was in a strange place. I didn't know what was happening. Harold was talking—I could see him sitting there and moving his lips, but I couldn't hear anything he was saying. I heard a lot of voices in my head, and finally I desperately asked the Lord for an answer (in my mind), and He said, "Go!"

It was the first time I had heard the Lord's voice. I jumped up and grabbed my bag. I stuffed another shirt in it and I told Harold, "I'm going to the Family." He just looked at me, all scared, and asked me, "Right now?" I said yes, and then called my dad to pick me up and take me to the Home. My dad asked why, seeing as he had just picked me up from there the night before. I didn't know what to say; I just told my parents I wanted to go to the Home and that I would be waiting for them to pick me up.

While waiting for my parents, Harold asked me a lot of questions, and for the first time I wasn't afraid to tell him I was leaving. (Before this, I'd always been horrified at the thought of leaving him, and couldn't stand the idea of living with-

out him.) But now I felt peace, and that nothing anyone could do would change my mind. I didn't know what I was doing, but I knew I had to follow that voice.

I called the Home and told Josue that I wanted to go there. He told me, "We'll have to pray about it." But I went ahead and went there without waiting. I didn't know how anything in the Family worked, but I felt I had to leave everything behind—everything!

The next day, I asked Abi if I was going to have to end my relationship with Harold to join the Family. She told me not to do anything drastic, and that I should keep visiting the Home and spending the night sometimes. Right then, I went to the room and prayed, telling Jesus that I was going to forsake Harold, which I thought humanly impossible, and also that I was going to give up marijuana, which was also impossible for me, and that He had to take these things out of my life and my heart. I knew that I needed a miracle.

So I called Harold, and with great pain in my soul told him of my decision. Right then the Lord gave me supernatural grace to rise above my past.

From that time on I've had more intense battles, but I'm the happiest and most satisfied person in the world. I don't regret trading in my old friends, parties, marijuana, my old boyfriend, and my horrible past life for my new life.

After four months, Harold (now Elias) joined the Family and went to Nicaragua, where I'm sure that he—just like me—learned a lot of things. When he finished his six months, we got together again, and now we've been married for almost two years. We're still learning together and helping each other. What a miracle!

Now I feel very happy; I know that whatever battles come or however difficult things get, the only place I want to be is in the Family. This is where there is true freedom and where I'm still finding answers and getting rid of the Enemy's bondage in my life, my spirit, and my health. Only in the Family is there unconditional love, help, consideration, and the support of others in prayer. Out there nobody cares about you, and even when they do care, the only thing they can offer is their sympathy, which doesn't do you any good at all.

Now that I'm back in the Family, I feel I've found my place to live, fight, and die, and I'm getting delivered from lots of things and learning more and more. Little by little, by God's grace, I'm learning to trust the Lord more

and not get frustrated or bitter. Bitterness is a weakness I've had to fight, and I've had to really resist the Enemy in this area. Since I joined, I've been delivered from lots of bondage and resentment, and the Lord has healed me of a lot of my physical weaknesses too, as I give Him more and more of my heart.

Jesus has told me through different channels that the only thing that keeps me alive is my connection with Him, and each time I get delivered from some bitterness or rebelliousness, the Lord miraculously heals me from another physical affliction.

Two years ago when I was very sick, the Lord was ready to take me, because I didn't want to cleanse my heart of certain things. While I was unconscious I saw the demons of Hell who were deceiving me, and I knew that I had let them in for a long time with my rebellion and bitterness. I was scared and I asked the Lord for another chance. They took me to the doctor and found out that I had a heart murmur, that my heart was a lot bigger than normal, and that I had fibrosis. All the contamination in my lungs was also draining into my heart.

They told me I needed to rest and do no exercise except slow walking.

It was a time of testing, but my shepherds got together with me and we had a prayer meeting where they helped me to examine my heart to see what I had to clean out. The Lord showed us that it was rebellion and bitterness against God. They prayed for me, and I got desperate with the Lord. I begged His forgiveness with all my heart and He delivered me.

The next time I went to have my heart checked, by a miracle it was perfectly fine! The fibrosis, the heart murmur, and everything else had completely disappeared! Now I realize that if I give part of my heart—even a small part—to the Enemy through resentment, rebellion, or some other bad attitude, I also am putting my health in the Enemy's hands, and he doesn't miss any opportunity to hurt, or even try to kill me, if he can.

Sometimes I feel tempted to get discouraged because I have to be so careful about my health, but it helps me to stay more desperate with the Lord and want to fight the Enemy and my besetting sins. In His great mercy He gives me what I need for my own spiritual and physical health!

Now I feel called to work with young people, because I know that in your teen years you often feel lost, alone, and as though you're on the verge of going crazy. Although I don't have the answers to all or even many of the questions, I know the Lord does and I'm happy to be a channel for them of His light and love and everything He wants to give. The Lord has all the answers and knows all our confusion that we don't even understand.

If I had to give any advice to those who are going through battles with depression, confusion, bitterness, and doubts, I would say that I tried everything of the world and nothing helped. All those worldly influences—music, drugs, rebellion, bitterness—just confused me even more and distorted my perception of life, people, and situations in general. There are good spirits. But there are also bad spirits that will enter through any door you leave open in your life, trying to hurt, confuse, make you bitter, hateful, and trying to get you away from the Lord so that you won't believe His Word, and won't ask for help.

Jesus is the only One Who understands us, even when we don't understand ourselves. He's the only One Who can rescue us from the misery and agony of a slow death through depression, bitterness, and resentment.

Living Proof to the Power of Prayer

By Jonathan (24),
Guatemala

My name is Jonathan and I'm from Costa Rica. Around 1980, when I was born, my parents, Zadok and Esther, joined the Family and went to serve the Lord in Mexico. When I was 11, we went back to Costa Rica and left the Family. We went to school like other kids, and although my parents had taught us well and we had a foundation in the Family, while away from home we had to make our own decisions.

In the school I was attending, there were a lot of problem kids, and most of them were my friends. When I started hanging out with them I started to act just like them. We drank, we smoked, and we stole things for fun, and these got to be addictions. At the age of 15, I started stealing and having problems with the law and the police. My life consisted of parties, drugs, girls, vandalism, and alcohol.

We had a gang, and we'd get together to do bad stuff. We liked to go to other neighborhoods and get into trouble, and we would start fights in other neighborhoods with other gangs, until we gained a lot of respect in many places in the city. Everyone knew us, the gangs and the people in the neighborhoods, and the police as well. I was constantly getting arrested, and I spent nights or days in jail, but each time I got out I went right back to the same thing.

I liked my life and I didn't want to change it. I thought I was really popular as everyone knew me. My parents knew what I was doing, and offered to help me get out of the life I was in, but I refused their help.

At 17 and 18, I was taking cocaine, marijuana, LSD, ecstasy, mushrooms, alcohol, pills, and anything else I could find that would get me high. I also sold drugs.

Due to all my problems with the police I decided to go to the coast to work with my relatives, hoping things would calm down if I moved. But it was just the opposite. I started dealing drugs to people I knew, and I started making money, not just from dealing to locals but also to tourists. I would steal from them and cheat them, and since I was getting more and more money, I always had more drugs.



In that environment I met all kinds of unsavory people—people who were involved in corruption, prostitution of minors, and other things. I became close friends with many of them and sometimes did work and favors for them and they also helped me. But my relatives found out about all this, and asked me to leave.

I rented a cabin with a friend, and from there we dealt drugs day and night. One day a guy came to ask us for marijuana, but we didn't have any left to sell him. When he left, we followed him and saw him get into a police car. If we had sold him anything, I'm sure we would be in jail now.

Right after that incident we left the area, since we realized the police already knew what we were doing. So we moved back to the city. I was 20 by then, and kept dealing drugs in my neighborhood.

I was into crack more than anything else, both selling and smoking it. Crack is notoriously addictive, and my customers would do anything to get it, even stealing from parents and friends, or mugging people. Many stole cars, robbed houses, and held up businesses, and I did the same—although I

never stole from my family. I always loved my parents and tried to treat them well, though inside I knew what I did was hurting them.

My influence on my younger siblings was totally negative, but I know my parents still loved me through it all. Some days I'd get home in the wee morning hours and find my mom praying for me, because she'd heard gunshots in the neighborhood. Or sometimes I would wake up to find my dad sitting on my bed praying for me. I think those prayers were what kept me alive, because I saw death close up on many occasions. And twice I overdosed on LSD and ecstasy.

I contacted a friend of mine who had formerly been in prison for a long time for murder, and I started working for him. He was a trafficker who dealt crack in the most dangerous neighborhood in the country. We moved to an abandoned house in the neighborhood which belonged to his mother, and we dealt drugs from there.

During those days I saw and did a lot of horrible things. I was violent, cold, and heartless, and nothing mattered to me besides drugs. I hurt a lot of people.

But one day I went to visit my parents, and my sister Jazmin was there, along with Abi. Jazmin had joined the Family a few months before, and was in Abi and Josue's Home. They asked if they could pray for me, and I remember thinking that one prayer more or less didn't make any difference. I never had anything against the Family, but I wasn't interested either, so I said I didn't mind if they prayed. We went into a room and Abi started telling me about the spirit world and Bacchus and Pan, and how these demons have trapped so many young people.

For a minute I thought she was crazier than me, but I didn't really care. Then she prayed, claiming the keys of the Kingdom, and asked the Lord to part the veil of the spiritual world. I closed my eyes and the Lord pulled aside the veil and allowed me to see what was happening in the spirit. I saw the demons that possessed me—and I saw deliverance!

They prayed for me for about 20 minutes, and I know the Lord delivered me from many bad spirits—not only of addiction and violence, but of death also. When they finished praying, I felt as light as a feather. I couldn't explain what had happened, but I knew it had been something incredible.

That night I stayed at my parents' house and started reading the "Conviction vs. Compromise" series. I soaked it all up like a sponge, and the next day something happened that I couldn't believe. I didn't feel like taking drugs, after years and years of getting high every day! A few years earlier I'd tried to quit, but it had never lasted more than half a day.

When I went outside, I felt like I had taken off the dark glasses I had been wearing for years. I felt different. I couldn't explain what had happened, but I knew Jesus had done a miracle. In the afternoon I went to see some of my friends, and everyone asked where I had been the night before, and how come I wasn't smoking.

Out of habit I started to smoke with them, but I felt like I was just taking aspirin when I didn't even have a headache! I didn't have that anxiety I used to have. I got up and left, and they all thought I had gone crazy, but while walking away I heard a voice telling me I didn't need that any more.

Since that day, I've never smoked weed or taken drugs. I started to visit the Home and study the Word with my sister.

A short time later, while I was out I met a girl I knew who was also into drugs, and she asked me if it was true that I had gone crazy. I told her that Jesus had changed my life and that I felt different. She told me that she saw something in my eyes that she hadn't seen before. She said that my eyes looked clean. Afterwards she told me that she wanted to be like me. I didn't know anything more than the salvation prayer and I told her, "Look, you can pray with me, and I'm sure that the Lord will change your life too!"

Then she said, "Do you think you could pray with me?" Right there we prayed the simplest prayer I have ever prayed in my life, and when we finished she was crying. She said, "You have no idea what that meant to me!"

At that moment I felt happier than I'd felt in years. It had been so long since I had made anyone happy, and in a matter of a few minutes I had made someone cry with happiness. I never saw that friend again, but I'm sure the Lord changed her life that day. After that experience, I was sure the Lord wanted me to serve Him; after seeing the happiness that girl experienced, there was no question that I wanted to give that to other people too.

One day a friend came over to my house. My dad sang her some songs and she received Jesus. She was also crying and really moved, and from that day on she stopped taking drugs too. She was a beautiful woman, and we started dating. Pretty soon we fell in love and we went together to the Home and went witnessing with them. As time went by, we decided we wanted to get married and join the Family. We even set a date for the wedding.

One day, though, her aunt who lives in the U.S. called and told her that after we got married we should go there, and she would give her a car and a house and would get us jobs in one of her companies. My girlfriend thought that sounded great and she even said it was the Lord's blessing on us now that we were changing. But in my heart I knew that the Lord was asking me to join the Family.

I was confused and didn't know what to do. I loved her so much and I didn't want to lose her, but I wanted to be in the Family too. All this brought us to the point where we decided to separate. As the weeks went by, I felt the Lord's call more and more strongly, but my girl-

friend felt it less and less. This got me desperate and I sought the Lord about it. I already knew what He would tell me to do, but I wanted to be sure.

I was in my bed praying and asking the Lord what I should do and I could hear the Lord saying, “Put Me first! Put Me first!” But I thought, No, no, maybe I’d better pray again later. The *Treasures* was on the bed and I picked it up and opened right to the Letter “Jesus First”!

After reading it I knew what I had to do. I went to my girlfriend’s house and told her that I was going to join the Family. It was hard for me and for her, and she asked me to wait and think about it. But I had already made my decision, and two days later they accepted me into the Home. It was a big victory for me, but it wasn’t over yet.

Two weeks later she called and said that she thought she was pregnant! I told her to do a pregnancy test and that I would call her later. Inside, I begged the Lord to please not let her be pregnant because it would be too hard for me. But the test was positive, and she called to say that if I didn’t come back to her she would take my child away, and that I would never see her or the

baby again. She started to condemn me so much that I couldn’t take it, and I hung up the phone and went to pray desperately. I didn’t know what to do.

First I’d had to forsake my girlfriend whom I loved very much, and now a baby too. I was crying and praying. The Lord spoke clearly to my heart and told me that I had put my hand to the plow, and I couldn’t look back, and that I should trust Him. So I called her and I told her that. I think that was one of the hardest decisions I’ve made in my life, but I knew the Lord had asked it of me and I did it by faith.

After talking for a long time, she hung up on me and I felt really sad, but I knew I was doing what the Lord asked of me. A week later I found out there was an error; she wasn’t pregnant after all.

Serving the Lord hasn’t always been easy, but without a doubt the Family is the best place in the world to serve Him, and I’m sure of one thing: When the Lord asks you to forsake something, He always gives you something better. That’s something I’ve experienced serving the Lord, and I love when it happens because it gives me more conviction and security that I wouldn’t want to be in any other place. I’d rather be dead than be anywhere else!

I want to close my testimony with a note about the power of prayer and the gift of prophecy: When I was still doing drugs, my sister Jazmin gave me a prophecy that said that I would join the Family and that the Lord was going to deliver me. At first I thought she had just written it to bother me. I thought it was ridiculous that anyone could get something from the Lord, and I laughed at her. But I didn’t throw it away, and four months later I joined the Family!

During that time, Pedro—Josue and Abi’s son—had a dream in which some people were trying to kill me, and they got from the Lord that they needed to pray for me every ten minutes for a whole week. At the end of the week, they called my parents to tell them what had happened, and they were amazed that that was the same week I was delivered! I’m sure that all those prayers set things up in the spirit so that everything would happen the way it did. I’m sure that if it weren’t for my parents’ prayers, since they never lost faith in me, as well as the prayers of many others, I wouldn’t be here today.

Out of the Swamp of Sin

By Steven (16, rejoined in June 2004), Mexico

I received the Lord when I was young. My parents were in the Family before, but then were FM off and on. Now they are live-out friends and continue to tithe. They still have a deep respect for the Family, though they aren't full-time members.

They used to have devotions with us kids and helped us get in the Word and witness, but we all went to public schools. I remember noticing my older brothers and sisters become bored with hearing my parents remind them to "get in the Word" before they watched TV and movies or went out.

I started drifting away from the Word by the time I was six. Slowly but surely, I didn't even think about it anymore. By the age of ten, I had the mouth of a sailor, and could argue better than anybody. That was the age I first tried marijuana. I only did it a few times a month, but at the age 11, I was arrested for smoking a joint at school. My mom picked me up from the detention home, but didn't seem too mad. (I think she was used to it, as my older brothers and sisters did the same.)

She did say, though, that the next year she was going to homeschool me, my older sister, and younger brother. At that time, my sister had a job, so she had sufficient money—and plenty of drugs. That's when I started getting seriously into drugs.

I was only 12 years old when every morning at about 6 AM, we would get up and smoke marijuana, continuing every half-hour throughout the day. Then I started doing "shrooms" (hallucinogenic mushrooms) as well.

At 14 I was back in public school and I failed some classes in my first semester in high school. My parents told me they would take me out of school if I didn't bring my grades up—so for the next semester I studied hard and received A's in all my classes. I quit weed at that time because I was challenged and had an alternative. I kept doing 'shrooms, though, oc-



asionally for a full day at a time. Once I did them for five days straight, then I started to have nosebleeds and blood in my urine.

If I met someone who didn't smoke weed or take 'shrooms, I would introduce them to it. Even if they really didn't want to do it, I used my knowledge of the drugs to convince them.

One of my biggest regrets is that I turned many people on to drugs. I probably messed up so many lives without me or them really knowing it. I still pray that the Lord will somehow work in their lives, either by using some person or Jesus Himself! I was so young and so stupid!

Apparently those kids were searching for something too. I started to notice that everyone I 'shroomed with was trying to come to some understanding of life. They would say things like, "What's the point of life?" "Are we here just for stupid reasons?" "We might as well just kill ourselves. We are all here just to die anyway."

It made me so sad, because I knew what we were here for. I didn't say anything to them, because whenever I did, tears would come to my eyes and I couldn't finish. I started to realize more and more that my "friends" were just

"Apparently those kids were searching for something too. I started to notice that everyone I 'shroomed with was trying to come to some understanding of life."

people who wanted my drugs. They would call me and say, "Hey, you got any Bud or 'shrooms?" If I said I did, they would want to hang out. But if I didn't, they would talk for about 10 seconds before hanging up. I didn't have friends—I had acquaintances.

One day, I went on the craziest drug trip ever. I can't even explain it, but I felt God was calling me to serve and follow Him. I started crying because I was so happy that I had found the answer. I even told my mom what I had found out. She was happy for me, until I apologized for doing mushrooms once again. Then she just looked at me and I could see in her eyes what she was thinking. She thought I was just tripping again.

The next day I fell into a state of depression. I kept thinking I had screwed God over, screwed my mom over, and my siblings thought I was even more stupid then ever. I just couldn't take it. I took mushrooms again, and once again something different happened to me. I started to witness—but the words I was say-



Steven dressed up as a clown for a CTP show

ing weren't mine. The words flowed out my mouth, and my friends just listened (or so I thought). The next day, though, when I came down, I felt the same depression as before. My friends didn't believe anything that I had said, thinking it was just the drug. After all, how could I witness when I was on drugs? I wasn't even sure if I believed.

I had to talk to someone about it, so I tried calling my only true friend that I really admired and loved. She came over, but had to leave almost right away for some reason. At that moment I broke down and started to cry. I had no other friends I could talk to. I was all alone. I was just there in my closet, weeping like a baby.

I started to pray desperately, like I never had before. I went into my room and opened my Bible to Psalms and began to read. What I read perfectly described how I was feeling. At that moment I felt a wave, like a blanket, come over me. I felt warm, comforted, loved.

I'd never felt anything like that in my whole life. I'd always known that Jesus loved me, but I never knew how much He loved me until that night!

“I went into my room and opened my Bible to Psalms and began to read. What I read perfectly described how I was feeling. At that moment I felt a wave, like a blanket, come over me. I felt warm, comforted, loved.”

I couldn't understand how even though I had done so many bad things, yet He was still ready to give me so much love and mercy. “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works unto the children of men.”

Of course I didn't become perfect after that. I still made plenty of mistakes. But Jesus and His Word helped me to get through them better than anything or anyone else. The tape *Break Out* helped me a lot. First with the verses about the world like 2 Cor.6:14,17; 1 Jn.2:15–17; and Rom.12:2a. Then the ones about witnessing like Eze.3:17–19; Mark 16:15; Jn.21:16; and Pro.11:30. I then started to witness to my friends—soberly, and I'm very happy to say that quite a few of them got saved! TYJ!

I had such a change in my life. We had a family reunion and my dad's sister, Annie, and her teens who were in the Family, visited as well.

My dad and I prayed about asking them to take me back to Mexico with them. They talked about it and prayed together with other Family members. While I waited for the answer, I stayed with them for a couple days at my grandfather's place. After this, they invited me to go back with them and try it out. When I arrived at their place, I loved it! We had devotions, and did all kinds of different things that we never did at my house. I read the Letter “Forsaking All,” and decided I wanted to follow Jesus 110%.

There is so much more that has helped me through my trials and tests, and I thank Jesus for His help. I am so thankful to the Lord for allowing me to come into this Home in Mexico, to see what it's like to serve Him, and live with others who love and serve Him too. Thank You, Jesus, for taking me out of that swamp full of sin. And may God bless this Family for helping me—and millions more!

The Only Place for Me

By Sam (27, of Maria),
Mexico

I was 14 when our family became TS (this was before FD, MM, and FM status). At the time, I didn't notice much difference when we were reclassified, as we had been living by ourselves for a while.

At the beginning I was very bitter at my parents, because I didn't have a choice whether to stay or leave. I just had to go along with them. I wanted to be in the Family full time. Obviously the Lord knew better.

I wrote in asking to rejoin, but received a reply that the Homes weren't accepting returnees under 16, and it was suggested I write back then. That was two years away, so I was pretty discouraged.

I kept on with my schooling, and wrote in again when I turned 16. I received another reply that there were no Homes in the area taking in any returnees at all! The advice was to stay where I was. That wasn't very easy for me. But by the time I turned 17, I had my license, my car, a job (a crew trainer at McDonald's), and all my friends. So though I still kept asking to rejoin, I wasn't really pushing for it.

Then I met some friends of my parents who had left the Family. Since I was interested in the Family, I asked them what it was like. I realize now that they were not the right people to ask, as basically they told me that all the Family did was sit around and read the Word all day. I figured I could do that from where I was; I could read the Word and not have to give anything up.

While we were TS we continued to read the Word. Since I was never much of a reader, for me it was a chore. This made it hard for me to get my Word time. As I got older I started getting away with not reading the Word—and that was also when I started getting into some trouble.

Overall we had a high standard as far as our input: We weren't allowed to listen to the



radio or System music. (Of course we did, but we weren't allowed to!)

Even though I had friends, I didn't feel I could relate to them; we had no common ground. They had lived in the same town for their entire lives, had all gone to the same school, and I was the only one who hadn't. I never got involved with any System girls either, because we had nothing in common. I always missed the Family girls.

Once in a while we'd receive some Family materials, like when *New Worlds to Discover (TIV)*, *SOS*, and *20 Minutes to Go* videos were sent out. Every time I'd watch them, especially the *TIV*, I'd go through trials feeling I was missing something. The *TIV* made me realize that being in the Family full time was what I wanted. The teens on the video seemed so inspired—I guess that's why they called it the *Teen Inspiration Video*. They looked more inspired than I was, because I didn't feel like I was doing anything. I felt that I would definitely be a lot happier being in the Family.

I kept writing in, requesting to rejoin. One day we received a call from a Home in Chicago, asking if they could visit in the next

two weeks. I was really excited. Later I found out that a main reason for their call was because I kept writing in and they wanted to check me out. My brother had also written in, but he never wound up rejoining.

So I went to work and told my friends that in two weeks I was going to be leaving to join the Family and do missionary work. They took that as my two weeks' notice. However, two weeks rolled around and the Home called, and said they couldn't make it, and that it would be another two weeks before they came. I had to call everybody and tell them it would be two *more* weeks, and *then* I'd be rejoining. But when *those* two weeks came up, the Home called again, and said it wouldn't be for yet another two weeks!

By that time all my friends and everybody at work didn't believe me anymore. Since it wasn't happening quickly, I figured maybe I wasn't supposed to rejoin. I was still excited about it, though, as deep down I wanted to. But the Enemy tried to make me think that it wasn't going to happen, so that I would get settled down.

Then one day after working late, I called my mom and she told me that the people from the Chicago Home were there and they wanted to talk to me. I hadn't expected that! When I got off the phone I just sat for about half an hour. That's when it really hit me, and I started seriously thinking about all I would have to give up.

Even though I wanted to rejoin and I knew I wasn't fulfilled, it was still a tough decision. My life was a vicious cycle: I got a job, and then because the job was so far away I had to get a car so I could go to work. Then once I got my car, I had to work to pay it off and keep it running, etc. But, of course, at the time I wasn't actually thinking about it that way. I was just thinking that now I was going to have to give up my car, give up my job, and give up my friends, which was the hardest part.

Finally, I decided to go home. We lived in a town 12 miles away from where I worked, and in between the two towns there is nothing but farmland. So as I was driving along, it just so happened that that night in the middle of nowhere I ran out of gas! My gas gauge was broken, but I had never run out of gas before. I walked to a farmhouse, called my dad and he came to pick me up.

The brethren from Chicago had been waiting for a while to meet me, and they had to visit another Home the same night, so they needed to get going. We finally arrived home, and I was able to talk with the two GASs for about ten minutes. Even though re-joining was a hard decision to make, I figured I had to step out and take this chance, because I'd been pushing for it for so long. I now had the opportunity to see if this was what I really wanted to do. After they left, I didn't hear from them for a few weeks, so I didn't know if anything was going to come of it. I didn't think much about it.

One day my dad called the Home, as he was going to be heading towards Chicago to bring some forsake-all to them, and they mentioned that they were looking for a vehicle. We told them we would keep our eye open if we saw anything. At the time my parents were selling a vehicle. After my dad got off the phone, he talked to my mom, my brother, and me, and asked what we thought about just giving the vehicle to the Home because they needed one. We all talked together and agreed on giving it. Because of that, my dad decided to drive out to

Chicago instead of taking the train, as he was originally going to do, and asked if I'd like to go with him as the rider.

We arrived at the Home, where I talked to one of the GASs for about an hour, and I decided that I wanted to join their Home. I figured the best way was to cut all ties as quick as I could, to ensure that I wouldn't back down on my decision. But the shepherd suggested that instead of quitting, I get a leave of absence for a couple of weeks, and then try it out in the Home to see if it was really what I wanted.

So I went back home, packed my stuff, and about a week later I moved in. Initially, it was supposed to be only for two weeks, after which I'd go back to work for two weeks, and then, if I decided I wanted to, I would rejoin at that time. But I ended up staying for three weeks because I didn't want to leave. When I finally had to leave, to take care of the AIDS test and to go about the procedure for rejoining, I asked if I could come back in a week instead of two. The shepherds prayed about it and said it would be okay.

I went back home, and that's when McDonald's tried offering me management, ha! The local general manager asked me, "We were thinking about making you manager. You want to stay?" Thankfully, money never really had a pull on me. So even though I was offered the manager position, I knew that it wasn't going to make me happy—because more money just meant more bills. If you have more money, you get something else, and then you have to pay off whatever else you get. I turned that job offer down and said I wanted to leave in a week, and they were fine about that.

So I moved in. This was all before the Charter, and some things happened during my time in the Family that I'm not sure were exactly right on. For some reason, I was constantly getting in trouble for different things—some that happened, others that were blown out of proportion. I kept getting correction for my weaker areas, and though the details weren't right, I asked the Lord to help me to accept it. That helped me a lot, since I was very defensive and anytime somebody would say something that wasn't right to the detail, I would snap back.

These little battles were just the Enemy trying to get me to quit, even though I had already rejoined. But

because I had asked the Lord to help me over that, it went pretty easy. I didn't at any time think that it was easier in the System than in the Family. I don't think anything happened to me in the Family that shouldn't have.

I had a very close friend in the System, closer to me than my brothers. Occasionally I'd give him a light witness, yet I never deeply witnessed to him or prayed with him. Once I rejoined, I went back on a road trip to the town where my parents lived, and the Lord convicted me to visit him. So I went to see him, and I explained how bad I felt, that it was my job and responsibility to tell him about the Lord, as he was my best friend, and I hadn't even done that for him.

The Lord spoke to him through me and we were both in tears, and he wound up praying to receive the Lord. It was a miracle, because two months later he was involved in a very serious accident, where the car rolled over and he was trapped inside. Thankfully, they were able to get him out, but it could have definitely been his last chance.

My parents were very supportive of me rejoining. And after having been in

the System, I know that there is no way I would ever want to go back. Of course, I have had struggles since rejoining. During the S2K and Feast 2003 I didn't think I could come close to being able to make it. I just felt I would blow it.

Sometimes I've thought, *Well, since I know I'm gonna fail and blow it anyway, I might as well just quit now and not worry about going through all that.* Those are the harder times for me.

One of the main reasons I've always wanted to stay in the Family is because I believe that we are so close to the Endtime. It would be so foolish to give up now after all the training we've had and all that we've been through, and wind up not getting the extra rewards. The main reason I want to stay is because when I get to Heaven I want the reward—maybe that's almost a selfish reason. I want to be able to be used of the Lord, especially during the Tribulation. I know that if I don't at least try and learn what the Lord wants me to learn now, and do my best to obey Him, then at that time the Lord's not going to be able to use me.

I had always felt inferior about my education, having been almost completely homeschooled. Before rejoining, I took my GED test and expected to score really low. But I was amazed to pass with pretty high scores for my area. About two months after this, the state lowered their passing score because high-school kids couldn't even pass it. Though I felt I was never very good at school, I knew that my good GED score was definitely because of my parents' faithfulness to obey the Word in teaching and training us.

Even at work, my overseers mentioned over and over how I was the best worker that they had. Again that is a credit to the Family and Family training. I never thought much about it growing up, but when you're in the System and are actually stacked against other people, you see how much you do have and how much better Family training is. Even since being in the Family, I've been given some pretty amazing offers from the System. Once, another SGA and I were offered to work for a certain company, starting with a managerial position, and it would have paid very well. But knowing what the Lord wanted us to do made it easy to turn it down.

The Family is the only place for me. So here I am, and hopefully here I'll stay. I've come this far by faith!

Meaning in Life

By Joana (18,
Brazilian, rejoined in
1996), Brazil

As Grandpa said, “Once the Lord wants you in His service, you will never be totally happy and fulfilled until you’re in it.” I found that to be true as I rejoined the Family.

I was born in the Family, and like a good little girl in a family of five boys, I would memorize and was a pro in quoting Psalms, verses, and the Word in general. My life as a kid in the Family was a happy one, and I have nothing to complain about.

In 1993 my parents separated, and three of us kids went with each of them. My dad decided to be a Tser, and my mom chose to leave, and I went with her.

Our life was fine, but as time passed I realized there was something missing. Flashes of cool things I did while in the Family started flooding my mind. I remembered happy faces, people smiling and laughing, having a reason to live. I realized I wanted to start living that happy life again.

Around that time, when I was 12, my dad was rejoining the CM Family and I decided to rejoin with him, along with two of my brothers. The Home I rejoined was not “Heaven,” but I learned so much.

Being in the Family for such a long time, sometimes we tend to get familiar with our lifestyle. As I grew older I seriously considered becoming FM, but the little time I spent there helped me realize I wanted more than that. That life just wasn’t for me.

So I came to the Home where I’m at now and have been here for a little over a year. I have truly found the meaning of life, what we’re here for, and that the Lord needs each one of us to fill that empty space in the puzzle of life.

Hats off to all of the young people who are still in the Family holding on to their calling! It’s not easy for us, especially with the world and its temptations, but we’re trying our best to serve the Lord and are willing to remain in the Family for His sake, because we love Him, and there’s no better place to be. After all, He has chosen us! We are truly blessed people—we have a meaning in life.

Joana playing the guitar at a fellowship in Rio



The Perfect Place for Me

By Ariana (20), SEA

I was born in the Family in New Delhi, India, in 1984. Since then, I've lived in Bangladesh, France, Spain, Italy, Romania, India, and Southeast Asia. When I was seven, my family became TS. I was too young to understand what that implied, as we had lived on our own a lot prior to that, so when we left the Home I thought it was another one of those trips. Soon, however, my mom explained what was different; she told me we were like the 70 disciples of Jesus and that the DO members were like the 12 apostles.

We lived in the north of France, in the Normandy region. We continued witnessing, and even moved to a port city to be able to witness to the sailors, but were soon prohibited from doing that. One day I would go out witnessing with my dad, the next day my brother would. It was fun going out witnessing. Around that time, my mom gave birth to my third brother.

Then when I was 9, persecution came and it affected our witnessing. Everybody knew who we were and it was difficult to survive. My dad got a job and we started going to school. I went to a small country school; it was my first experience, and overall it was pretty good.

But it all changed when we had to move. Because of my dad's job, we moved to a bigger city and I went to the local public school. It was a new experience for me, and not a very good one. The city kids were different than the country ones, rougher and meaner. It was a bit like *Comstock* (LOG 1, pgs.271–318). I was the different one—I had an accent when I spoke French—and I quickly learned that people feel threatened when others are different. I got bullied a lot.

Ariana (right) giving a Bible class to Wary (left)



“We moved to a bigger city and I went to the local public school. It was a new experience for me, and not a very good one. The city kids were different than the country ones, rougher and meaner. It was a bit like Comstock.”

The following year, my parents moved me to a private school, and things were better. Still, I never quite fit in school; I was always the odd one out. I didn't really want to be like the others, but at the same time I did, so it was confusing. I would read the Word and it would say, “Come out from among them,” and then I would go to school and feel like “coming out” wasn't so easy.

I spent a lot of my time reading—reading was my passion! At school they gave out prizes to those who read the most books: One year I won second place and the next year first place.

When I was 13 our family went to India for six months, and that changed my life. I got to go witnessing and had a lot of fun. I went with my dad on outreach and got to fellowship with Family members quite a bit. I also started reading the Word again.

When we returned to France, I went back to school and was one trimester behind. That didn't handicap me much, but fitting back into the school was hard for me. I would often come home in tears with a headache. I had problems at home too. I

guess it's a teen thing. I was starting to rebel against everything and was unhappy a lot of the time. I didn't read much Word, but read other stuff and watched a lot of videos.

That year my parents decided to move. My dad quit his job and we moved down south to the Pyrenees to clear out and sell my grandma's summerhouse. The rent was free and it was a nice house in the mountains. The view was magnificent! My brother left for Poland to join a Home there, and we eventually started rejoining as a family.

I went to school for my last year—it was the most horrid year I had ever had! I had problems at school, problems at home, and I didn't know what to do with myself. I would come home and cry be-



Ariana (front right) at Dave and Diamond's (back right) wedding

“I love all of you precious Family out there!—You are part of what makes this Family a wonderful place. Thank you so much for your service and love for the Lord. I’m so happy to be serving the Lord alongside you!”

cause I felt so miserable. I didn’t fit in.

Sometimes I wanted to leave my parents and join the Family; other times, I just wanted to go study and become a cook or some other profession. I am so grateful to my parents, who had a lot of patience with me and endured a lot, even though I knew I was a handful.

Finally, that summer I went with my brother to a Home that was pioneering North Africa. I stayed there for two months and then returned to France. By that time my family had fully rejoined. We were now CM. I went back to my former Home that was now in Spain, and my parents moved to India.

Joining the Family was a turning point in my life, but it was only the beginning. I had a lot of catching up to do. I went through a lot, broke some rules (I hadn’t totally gotten out of my rebellious stage), and was put on PE. I guess it took a lot

for the Lord to get through to me.

Since Spain, I’ve lived in Italy, and then Romania, India, and finally Southeast Asia, where I’ve been for the last two years. I didn’t have a lot of experience when I came here. I have since learned a lot about wit-

nessing, follow-up, giving Bible studies, etc. I am so thankful for the people in my Home who have had the patience to teach me how to adapt to this field. I love the country and its people and I’m glad the Lord has brought me to this fruitful place.

At times, I felt cheated that I didn’t grow up all my life in the Family, and I didn’t quite fit in the System either. I think the Lord allowed me to go through what I did because He wanted me to get a taste of what it was like out there. I know it has helped. Every time I’ve felt like giving up, I think back and realize, “I wasn’t happy then, so why would I be happy out there now?”

A lot of my friends have left the Family. That was difficult to go through, but I know that I have to make my own choices, and I feel called to continue on in this path the Lord has chosen for me.



Ariana painting at a CTP

The Family, even though it's not perfect, is the perfect place for me. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else! I feel at home here. I love the direction the Family is going. I love the changes that are being made.

I love all of you precious Family out there!—You are part of what makes this Family a wonderful place. Thank you so

much for your service and love for the Lord. I'm so happy to be serving the Lord alongside you! And thank you, Mama and Peter, for leading us along the path that we should go.

This is something I wrote that expresses my desire to give my all to the Lord and to the field I am on:

Looking at the world around me
I see pain and misery.
People are building a life
Filled with strife.
They are in despair,
No one seems to care.
Their hearts are crying,
Their will is dying.

There are so many out there.
They need our love.
They need our care.
Their lives are maimed,
Filled with pain.
Lord, help me be true
And do this for You:
To give my life each day
And Your will obey.
Give me the desire
To set the world on fire
With Your love.

I want to lay down my life
That others may live.
None of me—all of You.
Help me do
What You want me to.