

Michelle's Journey

I was born and raised in France, in a family of 9 children, in a rather poor environment. I was aware that others had more privileged lives and it was hard at times. And yet I felt loved and cared for. We grew up in a home where God was never mentioned. Both my parents were raised Catholic. My Dad became a Communist and my Mom was raised by her devout Catholic grandmother. They both became disillusioned with the Church and their approach to us was: if you want to go to Church, you can - it's up to you. None of us children ever made the decision to go on our own. So we grew up knowing nothing about who God was, and we had a vague perception of Jesus as the One on the "crucifix". We went to church for infant baptisms, occasionally for a wedding. I never saw a Bible while living in France, and I never heard the Gospel. I was not a radical atheist, but I used to believe there was no God. I didn't hear about Him. The best conclusion I arrived at was that He didn't exist.

I married an American stationed in my hometown. I was working in a office on an American military base. They employed French ladies who were bilingual. We came back to the States when I was 20 ½ years old. We had a 7 month old son. I could not adjust to life in the U.S. and the next 4-5 years were terrible. We also had a daughter during this time. We moved a lot and finally came back to Miami, FL., my husband's hometown. At that time, things worsened and we separated. My husband thought that I would not make it on my own and let me go back with the children to France for a visit. When I was to return, I couldn't. I thought my life would return to some degree of normalcy if I lived in France. I stayed for 8 months. I moved in with my parents, got a good job, by the grace of God. But at the end of 5 or so months, I started having the desire to return to the States. I couldn't understand why. I had nothing to come back to, except I knew my husband missed the children. I became obsessed with wanting to return to the U.S., and I did. My husband came back for a while, out of guilt; and then left after some very unhappy events occurred which later led to our divorce.

His Mom helped me a lot and after a while, my neighbors invited the children first to Sunday School, at their Baptist Church, and out of guilt, I started attending too. I very quickly responded to the Gospel and was baptized, as well as my 7 year old son. I attended there for about one year and a half and then met this lady friend who lived around the block from me and helped me by baby-sitting.. She became my mentor for a season. She would take me to "charismatic" meetings that were going on in Miami.

It was at one of those meetings in Miami that I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I was being touched by the Lord and the brothers came over to pray for me to receive the Holy Spirit. It changed my life for ever, giving me power to overcome that I didn't have before. And I finally belonged. The Body of Christ became my family, America became my home. I later moved into a single ladies, discipleship house.

Years later, Jim came into my life, and one of the reasons our marriage has been so good is that a lot of our issues had been dealt with individually before we came together. We had learned how to prefer one another and serve one another in "discipleship".

About our call to France - God spoke to Jim first. And it's been a process for me. At first it was hard because it meant leaving "home" again and it's hard at our age. I trust God in the process. He's always proven Himself faithful to me and He worked in my heart. But that doesn't mean I haven't gone through some mourning periods still at the thought of leaving my children and grandchildren. I believe God has called us as a couple, not as

individuals. I cry as I write this because I see that God had this in His heart all along, and I see the journey He's had me on to bring me to this. I know it won't be easy. What a tremendous privilege to be used by God in a small part in the spiritual journey of the French people!