



## Stella's Testimony

I was educated in a family of honest but unfortunately, non Christian people in the communist times in the USSR. This implies that I was subjected to communist education in school and in society which denied the existence of God. My father, though, was always telling that God exists and that we are Christians. Neither he nor anybody else in my family could explain what it meant to be a Christian. The only one thing we knew was that Christ died and that he was risen. Even Christmas was celebrated because everybody said it was a great holiday, that was all we could say about being a Christian. I had never had the chance of keeping a Bible in my hand before I became 32. I was always curious to read at least a line from it. But it was a forbidden book in former USSR and there was no way of having one.

I married a non Christian man and for 6 years we lived in the world, joining all the possible Communist organizations but we felt a void in our hearts. Besides, life seemed so boring in a country where there was nothing but work and the struggle for surviving in the nightmares of the long lines for providing elementary food or clothing. Life seemed aimless and horrible without any hope or way out. Once I thought that I shall die if it would go on like that.

Our marriage seemed to have reached the point of collapse because when everything around is twisted in the thoughts of people, people start to find faults with one another. Me and my husband decided to separate, thinking that divorce would make us happy and we did so. In this separation a very curious thing happened.

It was in 1992, when many Christian crusades were organized and people like us, former Communists, could finally hear from the Word of God. One day Mihail, my husband came to visit our son and he told me that he received Christ. I did not know what it meant and I thought it was just a new trick of his to return his family back. Of course, I did not want to hear anything. But looking at him and I saw something unusual – he was as if radiating light. He looked different than before. At that point I understood nothing and cut him short saying that none of his tricks would help him any more. No doubt, I did not know that God was already working in the life of my husband and in my life. I did not know that he was praying for our family and that very soon God was ready to offer me Salvation.

Once Mihail invited me to join him to church. He said: "I know you will like it!" I could not believe that my husband, the man who once liked noisy parties with drinks and stupid talks was now inviting me to church. I decided to go because of curiosity but great was my surprise to discover the Bethany Baptist Church situated right downtown of Balti - a beautiful building, full of light, with crowds of people, who were so very kind and so welcoming. I have never thought that in my city

there was such a nice place, and that it was a Baptist Church because I had always been told that the to Baptist Churches belonged the most ignorant and unworthy people.

The music started playing and the whole congregation started singing absolutely amazing melodies about God's Love. When the Pastor, Ivan Yurchak, read the first passage from the Bible and the first words about God were pronounced my heart started beating fast. It looked that it started absorbing the vigor of life, like a drying flower is drinking water after a long period of dry. My heart was absorbing the energy from every word I heard in church, be it preaching, singing, poems, anything. It started working regaining its normal rhythm after a long time of disorderly beating. I liked every minute of being in Church.

WE started visiting any possible meetings in Bethany Church at that time the only one Baptist Church in the city. Soon we discovered that love started returning to us. We became more understanding and more tolerant to one another. Joy returned into my life and my marriage became a lovely thing. No more hatred or revenge haunted me. We got many friends, brothers and sisters, who loved us and helped us understand what every person in our condition was supposed to do.

My husband grew ripe much sooner than I did. He was the first to repent and to get baptized. I was just learning things. During the ceremony of Mihail's baptism in June 1992, in the village Sverdiak, the same Pastor of Bethany Church, Ivan Yurchak, made the invitation and even offered to people to receive Christ and be baptized right on the spot.

This was the time I shall never forget. My heart and all my being was longing to step forward and join the church. I wanted it so much. But an inner voice was stopping me, telling that it was not yet the time, that I had to be more organized and to have the necessary clothes, that the rest of the people would laugh at me, for being so thoughtless, etc, It was the greatest struggle I had ever had in my life and I was defeated. I did not move an inch but after the service I felt a terrible pain in my heart which was bitterly crying for the missed chance. I could not forgive myself for being such a cowed. I felt as if I had missed the most important thing in my life...

In a week the same ceremony of Baptism of the Bethany Church in Balti was supposed to take place at the central lake of the city. These were the first years of freedom after the fall of communism. Churches came out from behind the curtain and organized such services in the open air for all the city to watch and see the baptism of the Baptists.

Preparing myself for this service, at home yet, I told myself that it was my day. I promised myself that I should give my life into the hands of Christ that day. Coming to the lake I have examined all the crowd and saw even some of my students among the visitors. This did not stop me. Nothing could stop me, any more, Christ was waiting for me and during the invitation I stepped forward and joined the front when Pastor, Ivan Yurchak, made the invitation. It was so simple. I felt as if a heavy burden was removed from my shoulders. Joy filled my heart. I was so happy that I have made it!

After this I started my journey with Christ. It was the time when many Americans started visiting Bethany Church and I was the only one Christian interpreter in the City of Balti. At the beginning,

when I knew very little from the Bible it was pretty scary to interpret preachings, because I understood the responsibility of doing it for Lord. But God was with me all the time, keeping me by my right hand.

Now, after 22 years of being a Christian, I understand that God had His plan for my life ready long before I agreed to join Him. He called me to translate for His people, giving me this wonderful skill which made my life so meaningful. Now my life is never boring as before.

God brought into my life many extraordinary people, who are men and women of God, from whom I learnt to value the Christian service. I am very grateful to my dear brothers: Bill Davis and his wife, Mary, Ted Lindwall and his wife, Susan, who became example of devotion and self-sacrifice in Lord's Ministry. It is the greatest privilege one can have – to serve Lord.

Now I have many brothers and sisters around the world and around Moldova. God showed to me numerous times that "With God all things are possible".