

Not of Ourselves

by Carl McMurray

We had been teaching class for almost four weeks. We struggled to find translators each night. We struggled to get advertising out and pass out our pamphlets at train stations. We carried loads of Bibles in our backpacks and we prayed. Daily and hard. We had come to plant a church with little help from anyone, no knowledge of the language, and depending on the Lord to do His work. Almost four weeks of daily prayer, making contacts, and classes...and no results. No one had responded. Frankly, we were getting discouraged as we thought of the money invested and the apparent foolishness of our venture.

Three or four days before we were to leave we spoke of our parting with the class. During that discussion two elderly folk spoke up and made known their desire to be baptized into Christ. It was a difficult decision for them. One was a retired Colonel in charge of the Soviet army in the Arctic. His wife was a retired submarine Captain. As card carrying communists it had always been against the law for them to attend any religious service, so our series of classes had been new and strange to them. Still they wanted to be baptized.

In the process of speaking with them, they requested that we must stay and teach. The class of elderly and middle aged folk also began to speak up and agree. I remember thinking, 'How frustrating. You want us to stay, but you don't want to obey.' I asked the class, "How many here are ready to obey and be baptized?" Not a hand was raised. Not a voice was heard. "How many are thinking about obeying the Lord and being baptized?" I asked. Almost the whole class raised their hands.

After getting past being stunned, I was ashamed of myself. I thought there was no response because no one had been baptized. Yet here was a group of people, middle aged and above, many of whom had never held a Bible. They made time every night to come listen to teachers who couldn't speak their language. And almost everyone in the class was affected to the point of giving consideration to their own soul's salvation. They begged us to stay, but we couldn't. Many wept for us to stay, and we sorrowed because we had to go. But the lesson was learned for me. We are just tools to take the word, that's all. The power to reach a heart is God's. The gospel truly is "*the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*" Romans 1:16. I have tried ever since not to get in the way of God's word for therein lies the ability to reach through language barriers, culture barriers, and sin sick hearts.