

deFelice Italy Ministry Update

11 January, 2010

It is difficult

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Greetings in the name of Christ, as we begin 2010!

It is extremely difficult to know where to start to share with you about all that God is doing here! Our hearts are overflowing with Thanksgiving as we see God's grace and mercy abounding.

English Course

Let me start by talking about an English course that we are starting as a means of evangelization. For probably seven or eight years, I've had a desire in my heart to prepare a very well done course to teach English. But it has been impossible to make the time to do so.

We have a course which we thought would work for our needs. So, in early December I put an ad on an Internet site which is focused on this local area to see if there would be any interest. We scheduled a meeting on a Sunday afternoon to explain the course, and there were about 10 people scheduled to come. I decided that we would not talk about God in a clear way at that meeting, but that instead we would gradually introduce Him during the course. In God's grace, a couple of days before the meeting we had one of the worst snows locally in several years. Almost everyone canceled, and just three families showed up.

As we began studying the material we planned

to use, we realized that while it was good, it just did not fit our particular needs. So, we asked for help from those of you in the USA. God provided a good group with wonderful hearts. These precious volunteers are willing to dedicate time to write exercises and do audio recording. This will allow us to prepare a course which we can use and freely share at no cost with others, both in Italy and around the world.

We put another ad on the Internet, and also gave out business card size invitations. We scheduled an introductory meeting for yesterday, Sunday, January 10. We received a number of phone calls and anticipated from 7 to 10 unbelievers at the meeting.

I recognize and confessed my sin of not having openly talked about God in the first meeting. In reality, it is better to be bold from the start, for if people are turned off about hearing about God, in a loving but bold way, God is evidently not at work in their hearts.

So yesterday afternoon, at four clock, a couple of the believers from the church had arrived, but none of the contacts. Was this going to be a meeting without a single contact? Five minutes later the first potential students arrived, and then others, and others, and others. When they stopped coming, there were about 20 unbelieving contacts present. Add to that the nine adult believers, and four children of believers, and our living room was full.

I spent about an hour and a half explaining the

course, and we did a number of English drills with them. But more importantly, I also very clearly talked about God, our faith in Him, and Jesus Christ being the center of our lives.

Sherrie had prepared refreshments for after the meeting. During that time, we had an hour and a half of incredibly open doors to talk boldly about Jesus Christ, faith in him, eternal judgment, and salvation in Jesus Christ alone. I do not believe we have ever had such an open, interested group of people open to hearing about God the first time. Every one of the believers present was able to have solid evangelistic conversations with others.

I think almost every single person who came took a copy of an evangelistic tract which is the testimony of Daniele and Petra, which they had just prepared a few days before. It has their picture on the front, and in it, it shares openly about Daniele's tumor, and the peace and joy they have in Jesus Christ. It contains an appeal to the reader to recognize that his own death is approaching, and that there is salvation in Jesus Christ alone. Since Petra was present, the people accepted the tract even more eagerly.

When the last unbeliever finally left, Adriano and Giovanni stayed on to talk, along with Sherrie, Ashley and I. I do not remember having ever seen their faces so glowing. Adriano mentioned that we have never seen anything like this in the 10 years we've been in this house. I believe this is the first time that Giovanni has ever had the opportunity to share evangelistically with someone. We pray and deeply thank God for reminding us of his power to open doors.

I shared with them what a powerful lesson this was for me. I had foolishly and sinfully decided to not talk boldly about God at the meeting three weeks ago. In his mercy, God sent the heavy snowfall which kept several people away who had been planning to come. Having repented of that sin, God brought an overflow of people, but even more so opened the door to

have extremely deep conversations about God with people who were asking me questions. What a reminder of the importance of being bold to share about Christ.

So, praise God with us for his work, both in us and through us. A very heartfelt thanks for the wonderful volunteers who are doing the lion's share of the work in helping us prepare this course. Thank you to each one of you.

Pray with us that we will see a number of people saved through this outreach.

Daniele's retirement

As of December 31, Daniele is officially retired, due to his medical condition caused by his tumor. His company had a very special farewell dinner for him in a nice restaurant. I helped Daniele prepare a letter to all of the people in his company, in which he very clearly talked about his cancer, and his salvation in Jesus Christ. We actually used the text of this letter, with some additional material, as their evangelistic tract, which I mentioned above.

On the day of that dinner, Daniele went into the office and gave a copy of the letter to each person, from the company owner down to the secretary, along with some cookies which Petra had prepared. That evening, after dinner, which was videotaped, Daniele's testimony was simple but powerful. The owner of the company spoke publicly, visibly moved, and shared that he envies Daniele's faith. Daniele received comments and emails about how moved people were by what he had written.

Progress with Manuel

Daniele and Petra have struggled greatly to get Manuel to be an obedient little boy. In fact, Manuel is extremely rebellious, and very intelligent for his age, using his intelligence to disobey. He realizes that his father is weak and tires easily, and uses this to full advantage to not obey. Needless to say, it creates a very difficult situation in the home. It does not help mat-

ters that neither Daniele nor Petra have a strong, assertive authoritative personality.

Last Wednesday, at our church meal, I was with the children of the church and due to the small conflict between Manuel and one of the little girls, I told him to come to me. Instead, he ran off, joyful that he once again had disobeyed and gotten away with it. I quickly caught him and took him into the bathroom with a level of authority which he had never seen. I think he felt the world was going to end. I stood him in front of me, down on my knees so that I was eye to eye with him, and for five minutes battled his strong will, forcing him to stand there without pushing away, forcing him to look me in the face, and to repeat meekly that he must obey when I give orders. I then walked 10 paces away and ordered him to come immediately, which he did like an obedient soldier in boot camp. I carried him to his mother, and made him report to her what the new rule of the house was: total, immediate obedience.

In the following days, I had them much on my heart, and in my prayers. I very much wanted a time in which we could spend an evening with them to help them understand what they needed to change in their approach. But it just did not seem possible to organize that in the foreseeable future, with their and our schedules. But I prayed.

On Friday, just two days later, Daniele and Petra left Manuel at Fabio and Laura's house while they went to Padova for Daniele to be checked to receive his next series of chemotherapy treatments. While at Padova, they stopped at Ikea and purchased a new bookcase for the church. On the way home, they delivered it and took an hour to set it up, enjoying being able to do something together without the confusion caused by Manuel. When they finished, Sherrie suggested they stay for supper, so they went and got Manuel and came back. At supper, I took the role of keeping Manuel in line. In meals at his home, he normally does what he likes, and

ignores orders with a grin. He found himself facing a new reality, and was not allowed to eat a favorite food because of his disobedience. For the first time, Daniele and Petra were able to really recognize Manuel's rebellion. I share with them some key principles, and practical advice, all of which I have shared multiple times. But it seems that for the very first time it all really clicked with them, since they were seeing with their own eyes examples of what it meant to not let him get away with rebellion.

They went home and there have been drastic changes in their home just in the last few days. They have never had anything like the authority they are now exercising with him. Obviously, he did not want to give up ground which he had enjoyed for a long time. But they are determined for his good to be consistent. I encourage them to work as a tag team, when Daniele just does not have the strength, which is frequently, he asks Petra to take over.

Please join us in praying for strength and consistency. Though there is a raging battle, they are already seeing some significant progress. Of course, in cases like these the real progress is in the parents. We rejoice how God orchestrated things for them to have supper with us. We rejoice how He worked to allow them to see the drastic difference between what they were doing what they need to do.

Girls' Day

During Christmas week, Ashley hosted the girls of the church overnight here. This included Martina, 17, Sara, 13, Giulia and Rose, both 10. The next day, I did some Bible teaching and the girls prepared dozens and dozens of Christmas cookies which they then made into plates to give to different families and contacts. It was a very rich time together, and the girls cannot wait to have day together again. Pray for us, as we seek ways to invest into their lives.

Mustafa:

Mustafa continues to come regularly, and is reading his Bible. It seems that God is greatly at work in his life. He has gone to visit his family in Morocco. Please pray with us that God would clearly show him his sin, and his need of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Closing

There is much more to share, and we rejoice in all that God is doing, but for now let me simply pray that you and we will keep our eyes upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and have his glory as our hearts' desire this year. There is so much which is so frivolous which can so easily fill our hours and our thoughts. May we live for that which is eternal, and will bring glory to our God.

Thank you for standing with us in prayer!!

Marco (and Sherrie)

Italy