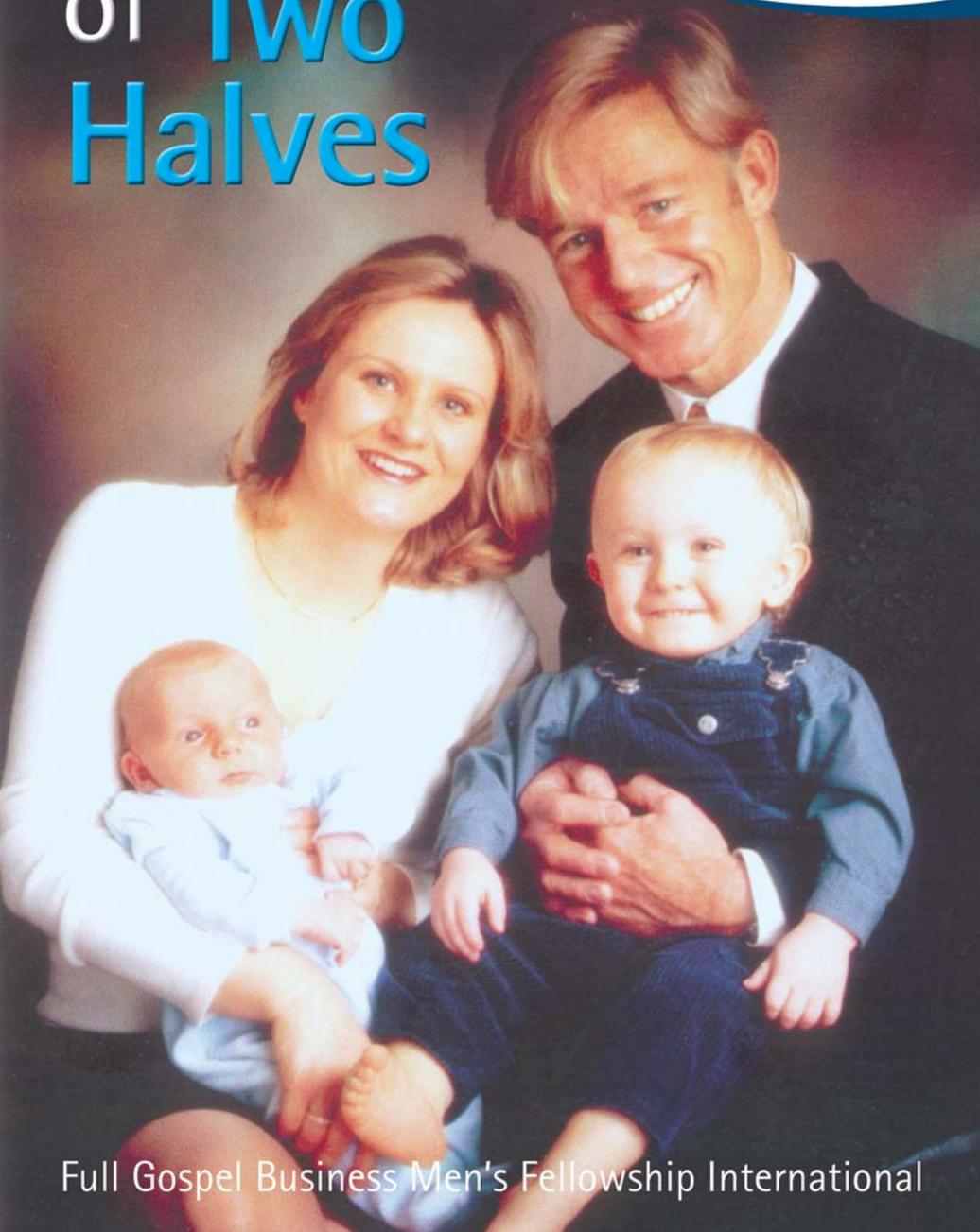


voice
to empower
men for life



A Life of **Two Halves**



Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International



A Life of Two Halves

Richard Coleman, Southampton

When I look back over my life it's been a little like a football match, in two halves. The first half was carried out my way, the decisions were all mine, thinking I had control, but I was in the dark. The second half was done Jesus' way, walking in the light letting Him guide me and make the decisions.

When I left college with 7 O Levels and 2 A Levels I had a burning desire to be a pilot. At the Officers and Aircrew Selection Centre at Biggin Hill I was told I had passed the first stage but that I should wait another

two years before joining, in order to mature. My impatience got the better of me and I joined that year, training to be a photographer at RAF Cosford and figured I would work my way up through the ranks.

Over the next year I passed a number of interviews and was told my commission was almost certain. A short home leave visit was to change the direction of my life unexpectedly. I bumped into an old friend from school who had left with no qualifications. He told me in conversation that he was now working at News International Newspapers, London and it became

apparent he was earning three times what I was on and he now had his own house and car.

I made a decision to buy myself out of the RAF despite my inevitable commission that would promote me to officer and despite the fact it was going to cost me three months salary.

Up until then I had known there was a God but He had never really received much attention from me and I certainly hadn't involved Him in any of my life changing decisions – until then.

I was desperate to get a job with News International to earn the same sort of money and have the same lifestyle as my friend, but I had been told there were no jobs going so all I could do was to pray and ask God for a miracle! This was the start of the second half.

The same agency that had told me there were no jobs rang to say an Editorial Assistant's vacancy had become available on a temporary basis. From this point on I began to understand the power of prayer and learnt to rely on God, the Father, who knew all things and loved me so much that he was even concerned with the small things in my life, as well as the bigger issues.

With continued prayers the job went from temporary to permanent and I began to climb my way up the career ladder. I worked for a while in photocomposing, where we had to

construct the pages of each newspaper. From there I successfully applied for a job as a Quality Assurance Officer with the responsibility for £4 million worth of advertising per week.

During this time of the Lord mercifully granting me this climb of success, I had earnestly been praying for a wife. After a while my prayer was answered in a dramatic fashion; one evening while out in Southampton, I met Jenny. I knew almost instantly that we would be married. It soon became clear that Jenny had received the same thunderbolt revelation that night,

and at 3a.m. she told her best friend that she knew she would never date another man and at 5a.m. woke her sister with excitement to tell her she had met the man she was going to

marry. That was Friday, on Saturday we said we loved each other, on Sunday I said light-heartedly, "I could really see us married," she said, "me too," so we both knew the inevitable. Three months later we were officially engaged.

But God had more for us. I had told Jenny the day after we met, that a few years ago I had received the news that I could not have children due to various sports damage and operations I had to go through. When I told her what I thought would be bombshell news she didn't bat an eyelid. I think somehow, even

It is only when we look back over our lives that we can see just how many miracles God has done, and how many prayers He has answered.

though we were unaware of it, God had filled us then with a quiet confidence that in Him all things were possible. So all worry about not having children was taken away and replaced with knowing God's Will will be done – no matter what.

After two very happy years together we tried a special treatment that had just become available called ICSI to have children, but there were many unexpected problems during the treatment which ultimately was unsuccessful.

There was sadness as a result of this failed attempt, but God cushioned our emotions and we quickly bounced back. We resolved that if we should go ahead with any more treatment we would only do so on God's prompting. We never gave up hope of a natural pregnancy even when we were told the odds of us becoming pregnant naturally were the equivalent to winning the lottery not twice but three times in a row!! But when God's involved mathematical odds are irrelevant.

For the next four years our minds happily focused on careers and moving house. Until one day my Mum said to us, "Are you two going to try again soon?" We had grown a lot in our Christian faith in the last four years and this time we prayed differently, this time we prayed, "Your will be done Lord, in the precious name of Jesus Christ". It felt right and we both had a quiet confidence, a peace inside, that

God had said it will work the second time.

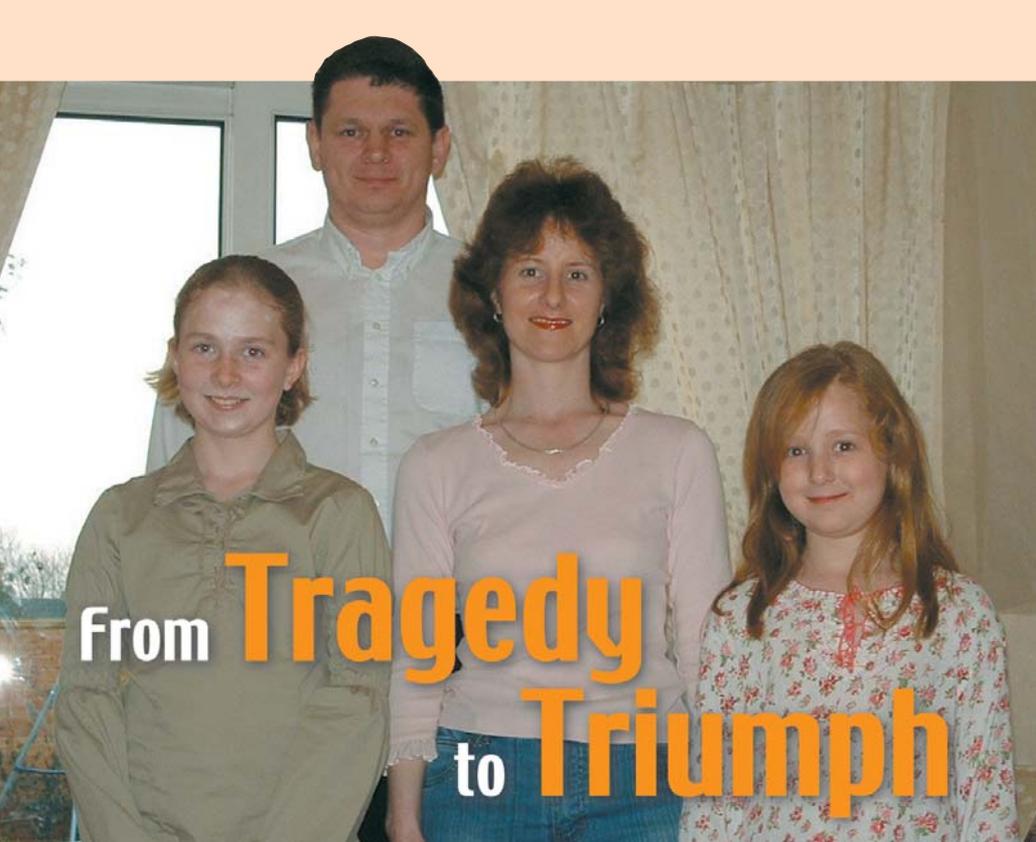
The treatment went smoothly and wonderfully, Jenny became pregnant. We had prayed everyday for a miracle and now we received one!

The pregnancy went well, and after a difficult birth we had a son, Luke Joshua. Jenny told me the day after she had Luke that God had spoken to her saying, "You will have another child but you won't have to go through that again." Jenny took this to mean not having to use ICSI and have a caesarean the second time.

When Luke was five months old we were having one of our regular FGBMFI prayer meetings on a Monday night. After everyone had gone, Jenny told me something quite astounding. All the time we had been praying for new speakers God was giving her a vision of walking out of St Anne's Maternity Hospital carrying another baby. Luke was with us, and he was still small. She said from this, God was telling us we would have another baby and we wouldn't have too long to wait. Well! Six weeks later Jenny found out she was about five weeks pregnant! Eight months later our second son Mathew was born.

It is only when we look back over our lives that we can see just how many miracles God has done, and how many prayers He has answered, even without us realizing it at the time. He loves us so much and wants to look after us in every way.

Richard Coleman is the secretary of the Southampton Local Group.



Jeffrey Lestz, London

How does a kid, who slept in abandoned autos in Chicago, ate out of garbage cans and lived on the streets, become successful? How does a person with a wretched childhood not only survive, but become successful in life? My life's story not only provides the answers to these questions, but also promises a gleam of light into seemingly impossible situations.

My grandparents, Russian Jews, immigrated to the United States in search of the 'land of opportunity.' My father was a mechanic in the

United States Air Force. When he got out of the military he served as an engraving apprentice earning a great income. At home we had a new car in the driveway and all the appearances of a prosperous family. But the pressure of mounting bills forced our family to sell everything and move into an apartment in the city of Chicago. I was the youngest of three children.

A uniformed policeman knocked on the door of our house when I was five years old, shattering what a short time earlier had been a composite picture of an American dream family. It was past midnight. "Is this the

Lestz residence?" He questioned. Even though I was just a child, I could see the terrified look in my mother's eyes as she invited him in. He informed her with regret that my father's body had been found floating in Lake Michigan. It was suicide.

Gone were the happy days of my childhood forever.

My mother could not cope with the tragedy and pressure of life. She suffered a nervous breakdown and turned to alcohol and pills to blot out the pain. I was placed in a foster

home and two weeks later my sister, brother and I were sent to an orphanage, where we were the only Jewish children. Our mother would visit us periodically. Often she promised to come, and didn't. On occasions she appeared when she was intoxicated. The embarrassment and rejection I felt were unbearable.

After two years in the orphanage, in 1966, when I was nine, the Director of the orphanage, brought me in to his office, closed the door and began, "Jeffrey, sometimes things in life are hard to understand and they don't seem to work out the way we think they should." He continued, "We received a phone call a few minutes ago. Son, this is very hard to tell you but your mother has passed away." She had withered away to only eighty pounds and died of pneumonia and a broken heart. I quickly ran out of the

office to a tree house on the grounds of the orphanage. I sat and sobbed like a baby. "Why God, would you take my mother and father and leave me as an orphan?" I was angry and confused. The dinner bell rang and I remember as I started to descend from the tree house that I shook my fist up at the heavens and told God "I hate you and you probably are not even real!"

Sometimes things in life are hard to understand and they don't seem to work out the way we think they should.

As if it were yesterday, I can remember being at the funeral of my mother and looking down at the casket and screaming, "I want my mommy! I

want my mommy!" My aunt panicked and screamed. The terror of seeing my mother in that casket and the sense of aloneness is something that I will never forget. I felt cheated out of my childhood and out of having parents. For years to come I would look at other kids with their parents and think, "what would it be like to have a real family?" The deep emotional scars resisted healing. In spite of the efforts of several people to love me, I grew more rebellious and refused to let people in my heart. I was in one foster home after another and felt displaced, unwanted and kicked from pillar to post. At the age of 13 I was drinking, starting to take drugs, and getting into trouble. I had joined a gang and although we weren't hurting anybody we were always involved in mischievousness.

Then I fell out with my foster father

who in a moment of anger threatened to send me back to the orphanage.

The present was miserable and the future seemed hopeless. I sat in my room loaded with self-pity and asked myself, "Did my father have the right idea about life and suicide?" I took a yellow pad I had used for drawing and wrote my goodbye story. It wasn't very long, but basically it said, "I realize no one loves me and I'm unwanted, so what is the reason to go on living – there is no future." I went into the bathroom and got one of my foster father's fresh razor blades and went back to my room. I sat on the edge of the bed, looked at my letter and slit my wrists. I pulled the covers over my body with only my head sticking out. In the morning I wouldn't have to face another miserable day. But my foster father, wanting to make it up to me came into my room and discovered what I had done. I was rushed to hospital.

After 58 stitches I was committed to the Chicago state hospital, where I was confined for six months. It was a horrible experience for a 13-year-old and made me grow more bitter each day. I ran away several times. Each time I was brought back and punished by being put in isolation or kept in restraints. Many nights I cried myself to sleep and asked, "Why me God – why do I have to have such a hard life?"

Finally I ran away from the hospital for good and lived on the streets of Chicago for almost two years. I slept in stairways, on park benches on the beach or in abandoned automobiles.

I was often cold and hungry and always awfully lonely. Looking out the window of an abandoned car or sleeping on a rooftop I would stare at the stars and reason, "If there is such a God, I hate him. How could he take away my mother and father and let a boy suffer this kind of hell on earth?"

I met some drug dealers and hippies and soon fell in with their culture which led me into drugs, sex and booze, to fill the void in my life. When I was 14, my friends had left Chicago to avoid the police. Again I considered suicide, I cried out, "God, if you are really real, if you are really the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, please help me! Lead me somewhere that I can get my life straightened out! Please God, if you are real, help me."

Crying Out For Help

A few weeks later I decided to go see my friends on the hippie farm where they has gone some 400 miles away in Southern Illinois University.

As I walked up the road to the hippie farm the mailbox read 'Cosmic Cowboys Farm'. I knew I was at the right place! Inside the house were my four drug dealing, hippie friends. I peered into the window and they were seated in the front room reading some books and eating popcorn. I knocked on the door and they greeted me. After we exchanged hugs they asked if I would like to join them. Sure, I said, "What are you doing?" They replied, "We are having A Bible study". "You mean like the Holy Bible?" "Yes," they replied. I said, "What have you guys been

smoking?" I declined their invitation and waited outside for an hour until they had finished. My mind raced with questions of what strange thing had happened to my friends.

Love is the Answer

In less than a week I was ready to go back to Chicago, I wanted nothing of this Jesus. They lovingly explained to me that Jesus was the promised Messiah and he too was Jewish! My response was, "No thanks guys! That's not for me; I am going back to Chicago." As I prepared to leave one of the young men, Michael, (by the way all four of them were of Jewish background) said the magic words, "You have tried so many other things, are you chicken to go to church with me?" I said, "Hey, I am a tough kid and not afraid of anything. I will go one time just to prove to you that I am not a chicken."

I will never forget that night. I expected the church service to be like a funeral. Was I in for the surprise of my life!

It was more like a rock and roll concert! Then the music slowed down and they began to sing a song called 'Coming Home'. It went,

"Coming home, coming home, never more to roam, open wide thine arms of love...never more to roam". I felt the presence of someone, or something, special and yet I was

reminded of all the times I

had told God that I

hated him for taking

my parents away

and leaving me

alone with no

one to love

me. The Pastor

said, "Jesus is

willing to

accept you

and when you

accept him

his father

becomes your

father." My

mind raced with

doubts and yet

I said to myself,

"Wow, wouldn't it be

cool to have a real Daddy

that I could go to with all my

problems? Wouldn't it be wonderful

to have someone who would help me

with life's problems?" I stood frozen

at my seat. Tears began to course

down my cheeks. A lump came up in

my throat as I whispered, "God, I do

not understand why my life is so

messed up... I do not understand

why no one loves me and why my

parents were taken away... I accept

you tonight and ask you, Jesus, to be

my Lord and Saviour. Please come

into my heart and forgive me of all

my sins." I felt instantly a peace I had

never felt before. I felt the warmth of

God's spirit all about me. Tears came

forth as if to flush out all the bad



things that had happened to me as a child. It must have been a sight that shocked some people. There I stood with a ponytail, wearing a pair of orange trousers with yellow daisies embroidered on the seat, a tie dye t-shirt and a pair of sandals.

This was all my earthly possessions and yet I knew at that moment I had a great future because now I was one of the 'King's Kids'. The Bible speaks in many

places about how God loves the orphans and widows. That night I saw the power of God and discovered that the prayer I had asked a few weeks before was answered.

From that moment everything changed. Michael became my foster father and he and the pastor mentored and encouraged me to read the Bible and other books on how God could bless me and I could do all things through God, and he indeed started to bless me.

I went to high school where I met Margo Griffin who is now my wife. She was also a hippie She committed her life to Christ a few months after we met. We went to university together and in 1975 I entered the world of financial planning. By hard work I was successful and after three years I was managing a team of 90 representatives in a pension and investment business. Later I started

my own business from which I semi-retired at the age of 43 before coming to London in August 2003. Throughout, God had truly blessed our endeavours. Currently I am in charge of a recruiting for a Financial Services Company.

Sometimes my story seems like a dream and yet I know it happened. Once, I despaired, now I have hope.

Sometimes my story seems like a dream and yet I know it happened. Once, I despaired, now I have hope. Once, I wandered the streets of Chicago, homeless,

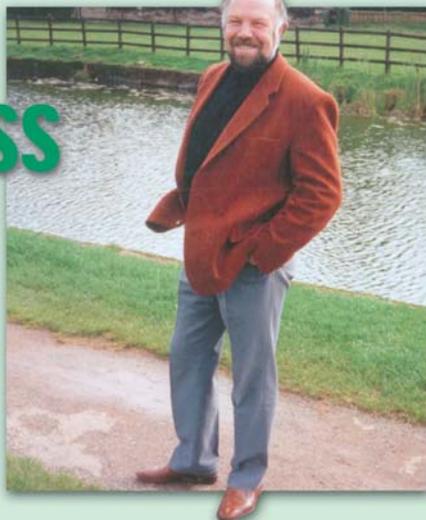
now I can live anywhere I want. Once I was lonely and now I have a wonderful wife and the family of God is huge! What has made the difference? It is not what, but who? His name is Y'shua or Jesus. He made me a new creature and he will do the same for anyone else. He wants to bless you and make your life prosperous!

If you have never received Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour it is actually quite easy and is a 'destiny changing' decision. Pray this prayer today if you never have, "Lord, Jesus I come to you today and lay all my problems at your feet. I acknowledge you as my Lord and Saviour. I ask you to forgive me of all my sins and become my friend and everyday guide of my life. Have your way with and in my life. I am trusting you today to take over my life. In Jesus name."

Jeffrey Lestz is a member of the London FGBMFI Local Group.

From **Darkness** into **Light**

Jeff Coombes, Exeter



I was born in a small market town in Dorset sixty-one years ago. My parents divorced when I was three and I went to live with my grandparents. When I was five my father remarried and I moved into my father's home. This was not a happy time and my stepmother treated me very badly, giving me frequent beatings. She would do anything she could to make my life unpleasant. My father supported her entirely and would often beat me up using his fists or belt. I frequently ran away for days on end until the police brought me back or I came home.

When I was fifteen my father took me out of school and apprenticed me as a blacksmith. I had been drinking in the local pubs for some time and now began to drink regularly and to fight with the soldiers who were based nearby.

After a year the blacksmith firm went

bankrupt so I started a job in the local clay mines as a piecework runner. This entailed going underground and pushing the wagons of clay from the face out to the rail link to the surface. I became very strong and fit so fighting became easier for me. To supplement my wages I began poaching from local estates and selling the game to local pubs and wealthy people. One night I was caught and taken before the owner who was also the local magistrate. He gave me the choice of going to Borstal or joining up. Three weeks later I was in the Royal Marines.

The subsequent years saw me posted to a commando unit in Singapore, working with and teaching Special Forces in North Africa, and serving as a mercenary in the Middle East always using or teaching fighting skills.

Things started going 'pear shaped' when on my return to the UK I invested and lost my savings in a disastrous business venture, as a

result of which we lost our home and my wife Annie and I separated. Circumstances brought us together again but then Annie was diagnosed with cancer. After a long course of chemotherapy and other treatment Annie came home desperately ill with the information that there was nothing else to be done. We struggled on as best we could before I had a mini breakdown. At this point I prayed to God to make her better. A year later she climbed a 3500 foot mountain in Scotland! Of course I didn't accept God's result, it was mine, and life went on pretty much as before.

Annie had to go to the gym to build up her strength and a Christian woman befriended her and invited her to various events to which I had to drive her. Eventually she was invited to an Alpha course. I went along as I had to drive and there was also food available. This was not for me and on the third evening I told the organisers so. In fact I told them it was a load of rubbish and they didn't know what they were talking about. But on the way home God had other ideas.

After leaving the meeting we got into our car and set off for home. After driving for about 300 metres I felt the overpowering need to stop the car. Something compelled me to get out of the car and go into an old building with a light on. I took only a few steps and found myself on my knees, with the absolute knowledge that I

was where I should be. The building was a Pentecostal church and was only open at that time of night because the pastor was talking to two young men about their behaviour in the town that night. There and then, in the presence of the pastor, I gave my life to Jesus. Six months later I was baptised in the river Exe.

From the moment of accepting Jesus into my life my world changed. I stopped swearing overnight and my visits to the pub became less frequent and my drinking became less compulsive. At work my management style changed and staff commented on the difference in me. After several months one woman was heard to say that I was a proper Christian because I cared for them.

I currently work as a Business and Training Consultant, I am an Associate Lecturer at three colleges, and lecture at a number of universities. I combine this with being a Field Representative with the FGBMFI, and I am also the South Western Area Representative for Christian Solidarity Worldwide. But life is not always easy, and, like many others, Annie and I have experienced times of difficulty. Our son Mathew died recently aged 36. We can't begin to understand why, yet we continue to trust God for everything and constantly thank him for the changes in and the quality of our lives. We truly have been taken from darkness into the healing light of God.

Jeff Coombes is a member of the Exeter Local Group and a Field Representative for the South West Region of FGBMFI.



Where's the Driver?

Keith Sholl, Cornwall

One very wet and windy night, on a narrow Cornish main road, I overtook a coach that was going fast. As I pulled in front of the coach in time to get on the left side of the road and the approaching double white lines, I turned the steering wheel but the car went straight on into the Cornish hedge (which is made up of lumps of granite and earth), and I only had a split second to think!

The first thought was 'this is it', the second was 'thank you Lord' and then the car hit the hedge and it went boot over bonnet and rolled several times eventually ending up in the road upside down so crushed that

the roof touched the dashboard, and so badly damaged that the scrap metal man could not even identify its make.

Prior to this I had been a salesman all my working life. I was brought up in a lovely Christian home being the youngest of three sons. We were all taken to church every Sunday and I became a very good churchgoer, even during my National Service in the Royal Navy I would attend church every Sunday.

After this National Service I married my wife Vivien and after various moves with different jobs we ended up living in Cornwall with two children. It was there that I was challenged by two different men about my lifestyle and that I ought to

know Jesus as my personal Saviour, for my sins were many and He would forgive me if I repented and asked for forgiveness. I did this and suddenly I knew my sins were forgiven as 'the burden of my heart rolled away' as the old hymn puts it. I knew this because I experienced a great weight lifted from me and a wonderful feeling of cleansing. Although still attending church we began to have fellowship with other people who were keen to grow in their relationship with Jesus.

From that beginning we began to put Jesus first in our lives. One particular book that helped me was called 'Prison to Praise' and other books by the same author, Merlin Carothers. He explained, giving some amazing examples, how our giving thanks in all sorts of situations releases the power of God to move, often miraculously, into and deal with the situation. So I took as my lifestyle some verses from the bible that say "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all situations." It wasn't easy but I began to practice thanking God, acknowledging Jesus as Lord in all situations. This is how I came to be thanking God as my car slid at speed towards the granite hedge.

Within one of our fellowship groups we were with people who had a special infilling of the Holy Spirit, who prayed in tongues and this excited us for we wanted to be more

effective for Jesus. So we too were prayed for and received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This gave me even more joy as I read the Bible and it became an even more 'living word' to me.

Which brings me back to the accident. I thanked Jesus as it was happening and he miraculously saved me. Notwithstanding the damaged state of the car, I was able to crawl out completely unscathed. The coach driver had pulled up and got

out in the pouring rain to see if he could help. I was standing by the car and he said to me, "What are we going to do with the driver?" I told him I was the driver! He had more shock than I did. The policemen who arrived as we were sitting in the coach said they would have the problem of telling someone about the driver's death, and again they could not believe I had come out unscathed.

After that, through an advert in the local paper, I went to a meeting of the FGBMFI and became a member with other men who love the Lord Jesus. This has given me the opportunity to grow and learn and see many miraculous things. People who have been healed and set free from fears, and many other things, and more than anything, people have received Jesus as their own personal Lord and Saviour.

Years before when I had the car

I was standing by the car and he said to me, "What are we going to do with the driver?" I told him I was the driver!

accident I was close to a sudden death, then on my 63rd birthday in 2001, I was admitted to hospital with another heart attack. I had had several during the previous five years and had been discharged after about five days in hospital and life had continued as normal. This time however I faced death slowly. I had several more heart attacks in hospital and they found I had two arteries completely blocked and the third 90% blocked. The specialist said I needed a bypass operation immediately but I wasn't fit enough for it! So I was in coronary care lying on my back with a special pump sown to my leg, hoping I would improve. I also had MRSA, and I was slowly passing away. However I knew a peace and the presence of God as I thanked and praise Him constantly.

After seven days the specialist said I had to be transferred to Plymouth for

a bypass operation “now or we will lose you”. I arrived at the hospital on a Wednesday evening and went to sleep. The next thing I knew was that it was Saturday morning and I was in an ordinary ward, having had a successful operation. When I saw the surgeon a few weeks later he told me that they were amazed at how I had come through the operation, as they had to give life support for longer than usual, and he agreed with me when I said that God still wanted me here. I, my wife, and all the family, and all my extended church family gave thanks for God is good.

Over the years we have been through many difficult times, but knowing Jesus has seen us through and we continue to encourage people to know Him for he is our best friend and the one who loves us so much, dying for us, and giving us eternal life. I commend Him to you.

Keith Sholl is a National Director for the South West Region of FGBMFI and a member of the West Cornwall local group.



empower men for life is the purpose and focus of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. What began following a vision given to Demos Shakarian, a business man, has spread to 160 nations in every continent in the world. The life changing story is told in the book *The Happiest People on Earth*.

Through our meetings we aim to:

- Reach men in all nations for Jesus Christ
- Reveal the power of Christ to men
- Offer Christian fellowship and mentoring for men
- Bring greater unity to the Christian Church worldwide
- Equip men to fulfil the Great Commission

If you have been challenged by the stories in VOICE you may be asking, "How can I become a Christian?"

A Christian is a person who has a personal and living relationship with God through inviting Jesus to become their Lord and Saviour.

To become a Christian there are 3 simple steps you need to take as you recognise that God loves you and wants space in your life to help you live life to the full.

Step 1 **Accept** the love God offers. Acknowledge that Jesus is the only Son of God, that you need His help in your life. Invite Him to help you have the living relationship that God offers you.

Step 2 **Believe** that Jesus died on the cross and rose again to pay the price for your sin to enable you to have a relationship with Him as your Lord and Saviour.

Step 3 **Confess** by saying sorry for all the sin and wrong things in your life. Tell Jesus you want to get rid of those things so that you can have a fresh start and receive His forgiveness.

Why not pray this simple prayer to invite Jesus into your life:

Lord Jesus, I want to thank you for showing me that God loves me, that you want me to know you personally, that you care about me and right now I say yes to your offer of friendship, forgiveness, and a fresh start. Please make yourself known to me as I invite you into my life.

I am sorry for the times I have hurt you and others, please forgive me and help me to change. Help me to forgive those who have hurt me and to become the person you want me to be. Let me know you as my special friend who is always with me, please give me the strength to follow this decision through. Amen.

Please let us know of your decision so that we can send you helpful information to "empower you for life".

- Please send me details of "empower men for life" meetings in my area.
- Please send me "Now that you've received Christ" booklet.

First Name: Surname:

Address:

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..... Postcode:

Tel: E-mail:

Data information will only be used to send you details of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International and "empower men for life". (Full address details overleaf.)



A Life of Two Halves

Richard Coleman



From Tragedy to Triumph

Jeffrey Lestz



From Darkness into Light

Jeff Coombes



Where's the Driver?

Keith Sholl



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