Desert Lighthouse
By Bill Williamson

It was March. I had been working long hours daily at the new church remodeling in Boulder City, Nevada, alongside my friend and pastor, Duane Jordan. He was the pastor of a new church plant here in the Las Vegas area for the Assemblies of God.

This particular evening I was torn between working on my newly acquired apartment, or going to the church to work on God’s house. It eventually occurred to me that I could begin now, 6:30 P.M., and work two hours and still leave plenty of time to work on my place too. I changed into work clothes and left for the church.

I worked only about 30 minutes when I walked out of the bathroom where I was wiring a light switch and GFI. A voice spoke, and I was startled. I had thought I was all alone in the building and had not heard the man come in. He spoke again as he emerged from the dimly lit hallway, and said, ‘what time are your services?’

I told him and we began to talk. He told me his name was James and that he worked for the carnival that had set up just down the street and over the hill. I told him I had seen his carnival.

Over the next hour and some minutes, James told me his story.

He had been saved by accepting Jesus as his Savior on May 21, 1981. His father had died of heart failure shortly after. He had been a victim of sodomy and rape at eleven. He ran and became addicted to crack. He was introduced to Teen Challenge and set free from drugs. He became addicted a second time, and again met Teen Challenge in a miraculous way. This time he was set free for good. He’s been off drugs ten years now.

He met a girl from Detroit and they married. They gave birth to twins. When the twins were five years old, their mother, James’ wife, stopped by a market to get some soda. When she came out of the market, she walked into a dispute between two men. Guns appeared, shots were fired, she was dead. James lost the children to her parents in a custody battle. James joined the carnival. He sees his children at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

James said he was tired of carnival life. He knew God was pursuing him. I talked to him about Youth With A Mission, (YWAM), and gave him my card, asking him to call me if he ever wanted to talk. I told him of how God met our mission team in India and Bhutan last spring in a great time of need.

Finally James said, ‘I don’t even know why I came over here. I was just at the store across the street. When I came out of the store and turned the corner to go back to the carnival bunk house, (on wheels), I glanced over here at this church. It looked like a ‘Lighthouse’. It was so bright in a sea of darkness. I just had to come over.

At these words my eyes began to water. There were no bright lights coming from the building,
only a dim hall light. During recent prayer times I had seen this building as a place where God’s light was going forth to Boulder City. Others had specifically seen it as a ‘Lighthouse’ to the Vegas area. God sent this carnival worker to tell us it was in fact a ‘Lighthouse for him.’

James and I talked some more. I gave him more encouragement in his walk. He started into the darkness, and then he turned back to me. He looked into my face and spoke, ‘Budapest.’ I looked at him puzzled and said, ‘do you mean Bhutan?’ He continued looking at me and said, ‘no, Budapest.’ I was puzzled, what did Budapest have to do with anything we had talked about? Nothing at all! I just looked at him with a wonder on my face. He shrugged his shoulders and turned back and disappeared into the darkness. I never saw James again.

Later in the month I received an e-mail from my friends who lead the YWAM base in Plzen, Czech Republic. They had invited me to consider and pray about staff involvement in their first DTS, (Discipleship Training School), to be held in early next year. I had been praying with much excitement about it. At that point in time I felt a ‘wait’ from the Lord about commitment to the CR DTS.

I was glad to hear from the Foye’s through their e-mail. They indicated they had some details of the upcoming DTS. They confirmed the dates and some other details. Then there was unfolded before me a proposed schedule of events. ‘Five weeks of lecture and two weeks of outreach, five more weeks of lecture and six more weeks of outreach, followed by two last weeks of lecture and debriefing.’ And it went on one step more to say, ‘the two-week outreach would be spent in BUDAPEST.’ I just sat at my computer and wept. I didn’t understand, and told Father so. But I knew he had revealed Budapest to me through James for a reason. I did not understand, but I knew it was significant. James did not understand, I’m sure, that he was a messenger of God that night in the desert of Nevada. I still don’t know what God is doing, or saying about Budapest. But I want to play the part he has for me. Please guide me, Father, into your will . . .

Thank you, Lord for James and the way you have used him to give encouragement to this ‘Lighthouse’ church, and for speaking to my heart about Budapest.

The rest of the story unfolded in April.

It occurred to me on April 2 to send the above documentation to the Foye’s in Czech Republic. I did so and received a quick reply the next day. The e-mail said that they had received the message about James the night before and read it aloud as they had staff guests in their home for the evening. She said they were touched deeply by what God may be doing. They prayed for James, and for what God may intend in Budapest.

They thought it odd that they were to leave as a family to Budapest on Monday. It was Saturday as I was reading the e-mail message. They were going to attend a ‘YWAM Central European Leader’s Consultation.’

I sense in my heart that Budapest will be praying this week for this carnival worker who stopped in obedience and uttered something he himself did not understand, ‘Budapest.’

You are awesome Father . . .

More . . .

I heard once again from my friends in Czech Republic as they forwarded the results of the meeting in Budapest. It seems the emphasis was on Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Albania and the
needs of the suffering refugees fleeing into surrounding countries. Many were trying to get into Hungary, and now even into Czech Republic.

At this report, my thoughts went back to Texas, where I participated in a YWAM Writing School for two months in October and November, last year, 1998. While there, I heard a young man give a report about what he and a group of Christians had seen while in Kosovo. I had never heard of Kosovo, and it was not popular in the news media yet. My heart was breaking for the Albanians as he told of their suffering. God was tugging at my heart for those in Serbia that have been persecuted.

I began to pray now specifically that God would use me in the way he would choose in this Baltic Region. My thoughts never forsook the idea that God would send me a messenger into this Nevada desert to alert me to this region.

Then . . .

On May 7 another leaf turned . . . What would you think the odds are that a Bosnian would stop in at our little church in the desert and ask for my help?

Two days ago, a young man came to the church, (I was in the bathroom where I was laying tiles), and asked directions to Las Vegas. He was driving a flat bed truck with flat quarry rock on it. I told him, and he was on his way. Then, as he pulled away from the curb, he turned into our parking lot, got out of the truck and locked the door. I didn't see all this, as I was back in the bathroom. He went across the street to get a soft drink. Moments later I heard his voice in the church again, and then he showed his face in the bathroom, exclaiming, 'I need help.'

He had locked his keys inside the truck. I couldn't help him much, but did call the police and eventually a locksmith. He had $30, and it took $29 to get into the truck. That left him with a dollar. While we were waiting for the locksmith, I ask him where he was from, because his accent was obviously not US. He said he was from Bosnia. He had been in the states only nine months. We made a little small talk and then the locksmith showed up. I went out with him to help with the English, and to see that he was not taken advantage of.

He said his Americanized name was, 'Eddy'. We said our good byes, and I asked him to stop if he ever came through BC again. After he was gone, I felt so bad because I had not offered him some help with finances with the rest of his trip. I talked to Father about it, but still wished I had done something for him. I had other questions I wished I had asked too.

I went out and ate lunch, returned to the church and began tiling again. About 3:30, I heard a voice yelling from the foyer. I recognized the voice just as 'Eddy' appeared again to me in the bathroom. He was smiling from ear to ear. He asked me to come see his new load that he was carrying from Vegas to Phoenix. I just smiled and said to myself, 'Thank you, Lord, for bringing him back.'

I found out that he was 19 years old, had no wife, or girl friend. He likes the states, but it is so dry compared to Bosnia. He loves Bosnia and misses the green. He now lives in Phoenix, in a neighborhood of other Bosnian's. He is a handsome young man, with a very dark hair and dark complexion. I liked his spirit, but don't know if he was Christian. I will ask him when I see him again. I asked him to always stop and say hello when coming through our town. Our church is on Nevada Highway and 4,000,000 vehicles a year pass our doors. As Eddy was leaving, I handed him my last $5 and told him it was from me as a blessing and a gift for a hamburger before he gets to Phoenix, about 6-7 hours away. He didn't want to take it, but I told him I considered him my friend,
and I wanted to help him. He took it.

A friendship has started between me and a Bosnian. I know that this is all part of God's heart for me. He is so awesome to bring 'James' the carnival worker to put that region on my heart, after giving me the desire in Texas. And now he brings a Bosnian to me here in the desert of Nevada. Is He awesome, or what? I can't wait to see what he does next. The plot thickens!