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trust God and live

In the year and a half that we were in Madrid, God did a deep work in our lives. He had broken us, smashing concepts and re-orienting priorities in the process. We learned that His thoughts and His ways are not our thoughts and our ways. Freed from traditional methods and conventional results, we looked to God in a more creative way.

The pressures and conflicts exposed roots of selfishness; the solid teaching we received caused intellectual tenets to become applied principles, changing super-spiritual Christians to effectively down-to-earth followers of Christ. We had assimilated the basic principles of community living through numerous mistakes. There were times of deep heart-to-heart communication as well as moments of exaggerated misunderstanding, times of great fun and moments of intense suffering. Through it all we grew and matured. Such is life.

The summer of 1975 found us restless and in a season of change. It was time to get on with life, but where? France? Catalonia? Then another invitation arrived. It came from

Marcos, a convert of an evangelistic outreach two summers before. He had lived in the community in Torrejon before doing his military service, and now wanted us to come to Barcelona to teach. We accepted, obligating ourselves for just one week.

Every morning Marcos gathered a handful of friends round to study the character of God. Our worship times were rich and the truths being taught were exciting and new to them. Their hunger was genuine and their commitment sincere—that was refreshing. That affirmed and confirmed that Yolène and I were to share our lives with this group—they were to become the nucleus of a new discipleship ministry.

We stayed with Marcos on and off until we could find a place of our own. Barcelona suffered from a severe housing shortage, making available properties expensive. We began each morning by scanning stacks of newspapers, then making countless phone calls and numerous visits. All futile, day after day after day. Nothing within our price range was ever suitable and vice versa. Things were not working out—had we made a mistake? In frustration we reviewed our tenets for being there: what had God said, what were we supposed to do? I could not shake the feeling of doom. Would this experiment end up in disaster, as well?

Then early one evening Ester called about a place in the suburb called Cornellà. The price was reasonable, but would it be worth another trip? We drove out for a half-hearted look. The place had been vacant for over a year, so the electricity was disconnected; by the light of the street lamp outside we toured the living room, three bedrooms, the tiny kitchen and bathroom. The place reeked of dampness

and old garbage. The accumulation of filth on the window panes was visible even in the twilight. The wallpaper was hideous, there was no hot water or heating and the address was in the roughest section of town. But it was all we could afford and we had peace, so we took it.

The borrowed table and folding chairs occupied little space in our new quarters. We cooked over a portable gas burner, heated with a space heater and used the coldest room to keep milk fresh. In the master bedroom -with walls the colour of grape jam-, opened suitcases served as dresser drawers while the bed springs were propped up on bricks. Showering and laundry were done at Marcos' place, an hour away. Yolène made several big cushions so people could sit on the living room floor and I built a couple of bookshelves and cabinets. The situation was primitive, but at least we had a place to ourselves. It was the first time we had lived alone in our two years of married life. Privacy –what a luxury! It gave us the time to work through relational differences and difficulties. Home Sweet Home!

After six months we had so little financial support that Yolène sold her piano I my guitar to buy food. The cold apartment and lack of hot water were wearing us down. Most French churches, not understanding YWAM's vision, had withdrawn financial support when we moved to Madrid. Now we were suffering and sorely tempted to go back to a regular paycheck lifestyle. And we might have, except that God's Presence was almost palpable during that time. Worship times with the group were refreshing and the scriptures that came out of prayer were relevant; we were sure that coming to Catalonia had not been a mistake. And where God called, He would also provide; so in spite of our non-

traditional circumstances, we decided to trust Him to meet our needs.

Ester's job in Cornellà was just ten minutes away, so she and some friends started coming round for lunch and often stayed on for dinner. As these committed their lives to God, they in turn brought more friends and the group expanded to ten. On weekends we gathered in our tiny dining room to pray for Spain and for each other. We saw people change from the inside out, getting freed from years of hang-ups and problems, which attracted even more young people. Soon there were twenty-five or thirty! The ministry belonged to all of us and God began to knit hearts together.

By that time four or five people rotated staying with us. They were serious about God and hungry to learn, but their full-time jobs left little opportunity for real discipleship. The only solution was to live-in. That was not traditional either, not in Christian circles nor in the Spanish society at large, even in the mid 1970's. Parents worried and church friends accused us of being a sect. We were unaware of any other community groups at that time, but it was the method Jesus used; He lived with His followers and shared life with them. The core group pooled resources to keep the ministry afloat and God blessed their faithfulness and unity.

The common denominator of our meetings was two-way communication with God: find out what He thinks about a particular situation and then intercede. One of the girls was burdened to pray for her brother, a young factory worker. Formerly involved in the occult and recently married, he was very confused. His depressive crises unsettled his new wife. We prayed intensely for days for this soul we had never met: "Oh God, break in on this young man's life; he