

SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, November 2004

One of the projects of the CCM is our online alcohol counselling project, based around the internet page www.carelinks.net/alcohol.html . We get many replies from all over the world, and we're currently in touch with around 2000 people from many countries in the world. We seek to direct folk to the 'higher power' of the 12 steps, and encourage them to find Him in truth.

Our specialism is in seeking to help those who aren't alcoholic but live with alcoholism in their family. We were led to counsel ALFREDO and CECILY; Alfredo was a self-confessed wife beater, and Cecily the faithful wife who desperately sought for a change in the husband she loves. It has been a wonderful testimony to the power of the doctrines of the truth to see a wonderful change in their lives. Alfredo quit drinking, their marriage became a wonderful, ongoing honeymoon experience; and they decided to devote their lives to spreading the doctrines which they had learnt.

This involved them setting up in their home what they call the "Bible Basics Church", which has been in operation for several months now. We hope and pray this will develop into a thriving Christadelphian ecclesia. They meet with a group of others to discuss one chapter of Bible Basics per week. They live on an island in the Southern Philippines, heartland of the MILF and other extremist Moslem organizations who seek to declare an independent, Moslem state. They are very far from any Christadelphian ecclesia.



Photo: Southern Philippines, Moslem held territory

A visit was made to them, in order to hear a wonderful confession of faith which would have satisfied any interviewing brother. They were then baptized, and they now seek to spread the Truth as far as they can, reflecting the grace and freedom which they have found.



Photo: Holding hands as they read Romans 6 at the baptism service

Cecily is 10 months pregnant, and could deliver at any time. Yet she and Alfredo travelled 8 hours on bumpy roads on a truck to meet up with us. They arrived early at our meeting place, and spent the time going door to door trying to interest people in the truth, and slept the night at the bus terminal. We travelled around together by motorbike and sidecar, with Cecily riding side saddle behind the driver.



Photo: Cecily riding with the motorbike she road side saddle on, at 10 months pregnant

The journey and whole experience was tough for her of course, and it was a pleasure to see her taking rest in the hotel bed finally.



Photo: Cecily exhausted, finally in bed in the hotel

With many tears, they typed out their personal testimony on our laptop [see below]. What is so amazing about them is that the distinctive doctrines of the Truth have found such meaning for them in practice- to the extent of saving them from a humanly hopeless situation.



Photo: Typing out their amazing personal testimony

Because of the dangerous and awful condition of the roads, they chose to return by boat to their home- some 14 hours on a small boat. Again, before leaving, they knocked on some doors to promote interest in the Truth.

Their zeal is invigorating! We believe we should do all we can to support them. They have translated the booklet “What is the Gospel?” into Cebuano, and we need some *funds* to get this printed.

Visiting this area is not very safe, there are travel warnings against it, but we believe we should do all we can to support them. What they would like to do is to open a centre for the families of alcoholics. The rent for this would come to about US\$150 / month. They are both educated people- Alfredo was a journalist, and Cecily has a degree in computer science. They have demonstrated their abilities by organizing what they call the “Bible Basics Church” which meets in their home. Their special interest is in reaching out to Moslems and to the families of alcoholics. They are both simply bursting to spread the Truth they have found and the life changing practical implications of it to as many as possible. What makes them so powerful as witnesses is their changed lives. They really would be ideal people to run such a centre.

What they desperately need is literature in Cebuano, and they are translating as much as they can, but it’s hard to do so without a computer of their own. We’d love to be able to provide them with a second hand laptop. If anybody could donate one, it would be so well used by them for the Truth. Further, there’s a need for funds to enable them to print and distribute the following literature of their choice in Cebuano:

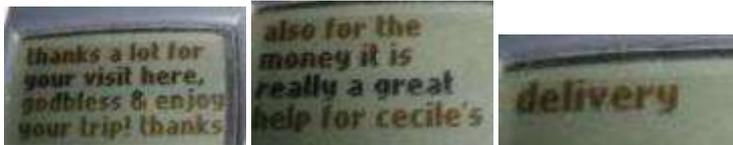
Living with alcoholism
Bible Basics for Moslems
Bible Basics

We really believe that the Truth can spread far and powerfully in this hitherto unreached region. We invite your prayers above all for them in this bold venture. We have made an open invitation to the ACBM to meet with us to discuss how we can work together in the fellowship of spreading the Gospel; although we do realize that where our new brother and sister are located is very far from any area of ACBM involvement at this time.

Also, a specific prayer request- for the safe delivery of their baby. We gave them some welfare for this and also some vitamins, courtesy of Now Foods.



Photo: Cecily with vitamins



Photos: Text messages received with thanks for your financial support

And above all- let us give thanks to God, that in yet another island of the Gentiles, a people are being called out to praise His Name.

Personal Testimony

Bro. Alfredo and Sis. Cecily (Southern Philippines)

Glory be to the Lord Jesus Christ for his great love and wonderful works for our lives.

It has been long since the bondage of sin have enslaved me. The power of alcoholism had caught me by the neck until things seemingly offered no chance to become better for me and my family.

It started when I was still a teenager, now I am 28 years old. I was raised as an orphan. I worked hard to find ways to have the so-called 'better life' – I worked my way up from early years in school until I finished college. I consider myself a hard working man because, were it not for it, I would be very far from finishing my college degree.

I started my career as a journalist. I reached the top of it when I was appointed as an editor-in-chief of a local newspaper here in Southern Philippines. However, being an orphan, what I wanted more than anything was to experience what companionship is, rather than material accomplishments.

First, I tried to mingle with people, lost people. There I begin to know what vices are. So I adventured to see what they could offer to me. The vices that interested me most was not drugs, but ALCOHOL. Considering myself an intellectual person, I chose alcohol rather than drugs because, I thought, it would be a lesser evil. For a moment I thought it was, but as it went on longer – days after days, months, then years, I found myself being tied with a bondage I could no longer take away from me. I then became addicted to alcohol. The longer I engaged in it, the more bitter it became in my life. For so many years, I was wrapped by the sting of alcoholism. So then I longed to be free from it.

I tried to befriend others in the society that sorrounds me. Perhaps, I thought, they would lead me to my quest for freedom from alcoholism. However, no person ever satisfied me, instead it worsened the loneliness and pulled me away from the peace that I longed for.

Maybe, I said to myself, my personal relationship with others is just too shallow, so I must go deeper. Thus, I engaged myself to a lady in the hope that she can help me find the freedom that I sought for. Later, she became my wife. My high expectation for marriage failed when, two days after we were wedded, I found out that the companionship with my wife could not even help me. The woman that I expected to listen to me when I would give myself to alcohol became my worst enemy. Everytime she would reprimand me for my drinking, I would look at her face as the 'devil's advocate'. It was indeed a disaster.

So instead of clinging to my wife for the cause of our marriage, I gave my faithfulness once again to my compadre – alcohol. This is then where our marriage was wrecked, torn-apart, and shattered. Whenever my wife would rebuke me of my drinking, then she would have the taste of my fist. I keep on hitting her – I hit, hit, hit, hit, hit her. Instead of becoming an ideal, she became a battered wife. Many time she would spit blood from her mouth. Lots of times she would find her nose bleeding. And it was countless times that she would have felt the strength of my fist in her face.

When my wife was two months pregnant, I remember hitting her and she held her stomach because of the excruciating pain. I could still remember the words that came out to her mouth when she cried: "Honey, please could you not show your mercy even to your unborn child?" Twice were the times that I thought she would miscarry our baby because of the hitting that I had been doing to her. I wanted to stop my drinking and stop my hand from hitting my wife but I really couldn't do it. I felt pity on the child inside my wife's womb, but I just couldn't stop myself from hurting my wife. I tried many ways to solve my addiction with alcohol but it was to no avail. I read lots of books on alcoholism, browsed through the internet on the many solutions to this addiction, consulted physicians, but all these were to no avail. It instead worsened every passing day.

One day, while I was browsing in the web, I came across the websites entitled: www.carelinks.net and then www.bbie.org. The sites captivated my interest and I spent hours and hours reading the books written by a certain Duncan Heaster – at this time, I never have the idea of who this person is. With so much of my reading of Mr. Heaster's book, there I discovered that what I needed most is the true doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. It took so many of my tears to come to know that my ultimate need is the presence of God in my life, and my family. Later, after re-reading some chapters of Bible Basics and Living with Alcoholism, I went home and, for the first time, my wife experienced my warm embrace while telling her, "Honey, the true Jesus is all we need." We spent that entire night in praying for God's forgiveness, and accepting Him as Lord and Saviour in our family. That was the first time my wife saw tears falling from my eyes.

For the first time in our married life, and in my entire life, I experienced peace that I can't describe. After a long time of marriage, it seemed that our honeymoon stage in marriage had only just started – we eat, pray, hug, kiss, and sleep together. For the first time in my life I find that I belong to someone. In all my past life of alcohol and not knowing the Truth, I really felt alienated from everyone all those years.

The thing really amazed everyone that surrounds me. I stopped drinking and gave myself entirely to my family. Today, seldom is the time that I and my wife will not go anywhere together. I accompany her everywhere she goes. She now experiences that she has a husband.

With all those years, I found out that:

- a. Marriage plus alcohol will truly give tragic disasters to every family – either the husband, wife, or children.
- b. Commitment to each other is the most significant aspect of marriage (Were it not for my wife's commitment for our marriage, ours will surely have been a broken home. Once I heard her pray, "Lord, you know that, despite of the aches that I experience from my husband, I really love him so much that I could not leave him.")
- c. God is the only solution of every problems, frustrations, desolations, and crises of our lives. The quest for freedom from anything starts when we surrender our lives to Him.

With all these goodnesses God has bestowed upon our lives, Cecile (my wife) and I gave our commitment to surrender our lives in the ministry of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. From day-one, that we received and committed to God's true gospel, we are continuously preaching to every family in our community – especially those families who were ruined by alcoholism. For almost three or four months now, there are already five families in our community who surrendered their lives to a quest for the true Lord Jesus Christ. And it is continuously growing.

We feel an urgent call. There are so many in our country that encounter the same problems and struggles. We know for sure that God called us to this ministry to administer the need of the millions of people here – who have deserted from the message of the true gospel and therefore are in bondage to the power of sin. We know for sure that there are husbands and wives out there that need God.

I resigned from my job, and also my wife, and we gave ourselves fully in the preaching of the true gospel. We are living according to our faith. As we answer God's call for us in this area, we know it is seemingly impossible for us to succeed. But I would say, "The naked eye may impossibly saw it, but we have these eyes of faith." We are living by faith.

My wife and I have this vision of establishing a ministry where every victim of alcoholism must be rehabilitated, especially those husbands of long-suffering wives, those who were in just our position. In our area, alcoholism destroys 70 percent of every home. It means it is everywhere. It destroys much more than drugs. This ministry also aims at educating people who, after receiving God's providence of freedom, would surrender themselves to God and join me and my wife in preaching the gospel of God. These preachers, if there will be (and I know that there will be), I believe, MUST be educated with the untainted principle of the Bible as taught in Bible Basics.

I wrote this testimony in the hope that there is someone out there, within the four corners of this world, who would include us in your PRAYERS. Your prayers will be the greatest thing that you can give to us. Or perhaps help us – me and my wife, in anything that you can. I thank God for my good friend Duncan Heaster and his wife Cindy for their prayers and support. For spending so much of their time for personally ministering to us. Truly, they (Duncan and Cindy) let me feel that I have a family. My wife and my child means so much for me now because, as being orphaned, I have nothing in this world that I can call my 'own' except for them. So great is God's grace that I couldn't ask for more. King David says, "What shall I give to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" For me and my wife, our answer is 'OUR LIVES'.

your brothers and sisters of CCM