

voice

to empower
men for life



Spice Up your life

Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International



When God Sends an Angel

Nick Battle, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

I grew up in Sheffield with a mum who was a beautiful, fragile person but also an alcoholic. She frequently, and often with great drama, would try to depart this life. I guess I parented her from the age of 13. To make matters more complicated she had a Christian

faith, but it was confused from a combination of bitterness, whisky and prescribed drugs such as mogadon and valium. My mum and dad divorced when I was sixteen although they had been pretty much living separate lives for ten years prior to that.

My Faith went from my Head to my Heart

Attendance at our local Anglican Church persuaded me intellectually that Yes – there is a God; Yes – there is a heaven and hell; Yes – Jesus died for my sins. So I went forward for Confirmation when I had my first experience of God. As the Bishop laid his hands on my head I felt a warmth and the presence of God. After that my faith went from my head to my heart. Later at the age of nineteen, reading the Bible in the back of a Mini-Cooper on the way home from a Christian Confer-

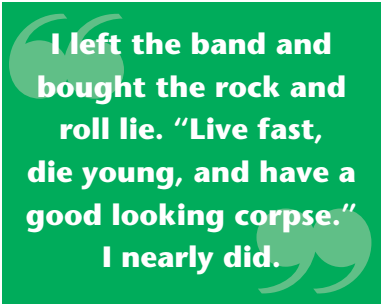
ence, I said to the driver, “I have a feeling something good is about to happen.” It did. I started shouting in an unknown language as the Holy Spirit filled me. WOW! This gift has been such a treasured blessing as it enabled me, in future moments of extreme pressure, to let the Holy Spirit pray for me in the perfect will of God.

The Rock and Roll Lie

At 19, I joined the country’s first Christian rock band *After the Fire*, playing secular venues. We drank pints of orange juice, and sold out clubs like The Marquee in Wardour Street, London W1 on a regular basis. Along the way though, as a result of chronic dysfunction, I left the band and bought the rock and roll lie. “Live fast, die young, and have a good looking corpse.” I nearly did.

In 1980 I left the music business, returned home to Sheffield, to try to piece my life together. I became a postman, then a steelworker, before once again returning to London, to have another go at the music business. By God’s grace I ended up writing songs for Cliff Richard, and he recorded two of them, giving me my first break as a songwriter. For the

next six years I made the odd record, secured a music publishing deal for myself, but I was never going to set the world on fire as a major musical talent. I was good, not great.



I left the band and bought the rock and roll lie. “Live fast, die young, and have a good looking corpse.” I nearly did.

God Sends an Angel

In 1986 I went to work for Miles Copeland, who was then managing the biggest band in the world, The Police. I ended up as the Head of A&R (Artists and Repertoire) for his entire group of companies, looking after, finding and nurturing talent. I was now having hit records, discovering new artists, but my relationship with God was a little like a husband who spends far too much time away from home. It lacked real intimacy.

By the time of the Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival in 1988, I had straightened out a lot. There I met Lynn, who from the moment I engaged her in conversation, took my heart captive. We were married the following year and in 1992 our first daughter Misha was born. In



February 1993 we decided to move into a new home in Chorleywood, where we discovered Lynn was pregnant again. Our joy, however, was short lived. Lynn was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had the entire breast removed and just six weeks later, Jodie was born by caesarean section.

Magic and Loss

Six months of chemotherapy and radiotherapy followed, and then life returned to normal for a while. In 1996 I was working as a music publisher and heard that one of my

former clients, Simon Fuller, had a brand new girl group. I introduced them to my boss and we signed them. 40 million records later, The Spice Girls had taken the world by storm. I was 39 years old, my wife was well, and I was pulling down a nice six figure income. Misha and Jodie, our daughters, were beautiful little girls. My wife had survived her ordeal, surely we were OK now?

In 2000 we were on a sailing holiday in Greece, when Lynn fell over and winded herself, it took her about ten minutes to recover. When we got home the doctor gave her a check up.

The cancer was back more virulent than before. Lynn fought valiantly. She was a lioness fighting for life to watch her cubs grow up. We had wonderful support on every level. We prayed for healing again, we kept praying, and did everything humanly and spiritually possible to save her. In the end God made the decision, and plucked the fairest flower from the garden. Lynn died in my arms on February 20th 2003 after a ten year fight.

Where was God in all of this? Well I saw Him in the love of our friends at our church at St. Andrew's, Chorleywood who were and continue to be amazing. I saw Him in the kindness of strangers, I saw him in the supernatural courage my wife showed in overcoming so much. I saw him in the love of our children and in the way He sustained me so I could become a nurse, a cook, a housekeeper for those three years.

Only God Knows...

Was I angry? You bet! Did I rage, call out to God and ask Him what He was playing at? Yes, I did. In the end He just took her, and I have come to realise this. It is very simple. Only God knows when we are born, the

purpose of our lives and when we are going to die. All that we are given on this earth is a present from Him. He asks us to look after it, to be responsible for it and ultimately also

to give an account for what we have done with it.

God has given me a second chance, and I now celebrate life and all its God-filled gloriousness with an even greater zest than before.

God Sends Another Angel

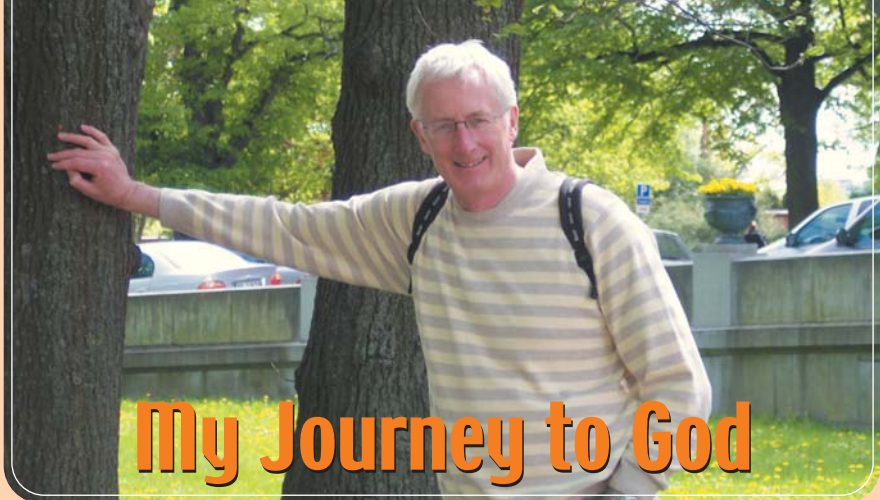
So I found myself as a single parent with two little gifts from God, Misha and Jodie. We were

all completely broken. I had no idea I would encounter another precious and breathtaking gift from Him, but I did. I found another angel. Her name is Nicky, and we were married on March 26th 2005. She adores Misha and Jodie and as importantly, they adore her. As do I!

My life has been tragic at times, yes, but do not feel sorry for me, rather look upon it like this. I know what it is to be truly loved. God has given me a second chance, and I now celebrate life and all its God-filled gloriousness with an even greater zest than before. I, and my family, have been restored by the power and grace of a loving Heavenly Father.

When God says in the Bible, "I will restore unto you the years the locusts have eaten," He means it. Take Him at his word.

Nick Battle is currently completing his autobiography for Authentic Media titled, 'Big Boys Don't Cry'.



Paul Barnes, Woking, Surrey

Let me set the scene. I am in my early 50's, a logic-driven person and a committed non-believer all my life. I was not just anti-religious, I was a confirmed atheist. I even asked to be excused from Religious Education at school. I had convinced myself that there was not a God and was happy to argue my corner with anyone. I simply could not see what it was that others could see in religion but concluded that there must be something in it – it seemed implausible that all church-goers were misleading themselves! Whatever it was they saw, I couldn't see it.

My wife, Linda, is a committed Christian. After going on the Alpha course she “had her Christianity re-awakened”. I made a New Year's Resolution to go on the Alpha course myself. Unfortunately, because of business commitments, I had to miss a few sessions. I e-mailed Nick, who

was leading the Alpha course, and told him that I had made my mind up that religion was not for me. End of story – or so I thought!

Over the next few days I found myself thinking about God more and more. I began to feel unhappy. I could not say why. I have a loving family and all the material wealth any man could want. Then began a sequence of events that have totally transformed my life.

A lifelong friend who is a Pastor in Switzerland called and asked Linda if I had found God yet. Shortly afterwards a dear well-meaning local friend asked me over the telephone if I had found God yet? To a non-believer this is a preposterous question. It's no different to a non-believer asking a believer if she has lost God yet. Think about it! I answered her politely but I nearly burst a blood vessel when she said she would pray for me. I didn't want anyone praying for me – I thought that prayers were for people in need ...Not me!

Then, for the first time in my life, I opened a Bible ...completely at random. It fell open at Jeremiah 6. My eyes went straight to the words in verse 19, "I am bringing ruin on these people, because they rejected my teaching and have not obeyed my words." I have no idea how many occurrences there are in the Bible of God berating groups for not obeying Him, but the chances of me selecting that particular message must be slim. On top of all this, one of my work colleagues announced to me that she had just become a Born Again Christian. My normal reaction would have been "Oh dear!" Inexplicably I felt a wave of joy come over me. That made me really stop and think.

I have never prayed before in my life. Looking back it was not so much praying, more a cry for help – I wanted inner peace.

On 04/04/04 (this appeals to my mathematical brain!) Chris, the wife of our Swiss Pastor friend, was staying with us. I told her that I had been looking for God but could not find Him. She then said something that completely bowled me over: "YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP."

Well, it might be obvious to the rest of the world, but it was not obvious to me.

That night I was very restless. At 3am I woke to find myself praying and letting God know that I was ready to take that first step. I have never prayed before in my life. Looking back it was not so much praying, more a cry for help – I wanted inner

peace. I woke Linda and asked her to pray with me – another first. We prayed together and it was a truly beautiful moment.

I had prayed for inner peace and, for about four days, I had exactly that. God had revealed Himself to me for the first time in a way that I could recognise. At last I thought that I had found what I was looking for.

Having taken that first step I had no idea where to go next. I needed direction. I asked Linda to pray with me one morning for God to give me a signal. Ten minutes later I went downstairs and opened the post and found an invitation to join a

House Group. God really was trying to get through to me.

On Easter Sunday I went to Church with Linda. I made up my mind that I would sit at the back and watch what was going on. When I arrived at the church I was drawn in by the music and the occasion. I went in and found that there was no spare seat at the back. I was devastated. I felt like I was being excluded, an outsider looking in and I wanted to be an insider looking out. I left immediately. How could God play such a trick on me? If this was what being a believer was like, give me non-belief any day!

On Easter Monday I was at rock bottom. I told Linda and she could see I needed help. She arranged for

me to see Helen MacDonald that evening. My spirits were lifted when I heard that Helen had also had a traumatic time coming to terms with Christianity. My perception was that everyone found it easy – it was only me that found it difficult. I had never spoken to anyone who had gone through what I was going through! I asked Helen if I was going bonkers and she reassured me that I was sane. She has no idea how relieved that made me feel. Helen's assessment was that I was trapped in the spiritual birth canal. I had no idea what she was talking about, but I was soon to find out! It is a very vivid analogy.

Helen invited me to pray with her and to repeat her words, if I was willing and able. We started "Dear God, I don't know who You are or what You are." I could feel the emotion building up inside me. I started sobbing with my head in my hands. Helen next offered me, "I am willing to take a gamble," and I felt myself explode. I cried ...and I cried ...and I cried. After what seemed an eternity I got the words out and Helen came straight back at me with, "I want to enter into a relationship with You." By this time the crying was uncontrollable and I could feel all my frustration and negative emotions flowing out of me. I don't know how long it was that I was howling before I could get the words out but it must have been at least five minutes. A humbling experience. By this time I was completely shattered.

I then understood all too well what she meant by being trapped in the spiritual birth canal! I felt I had just been born.

I hugged Linda and Helen and felt so joyous. Helen gave Linda a note of a passage to read from the Bible – John Chapter 3 Verses 1 to 21 – and suggested we read it the following evening. As suggested we left it a day before we read it – I was too exhausted to do anything THAT night – and remember, this is only the second time I have opened a Bible. It made perfect sense to me, especially Verse 3:

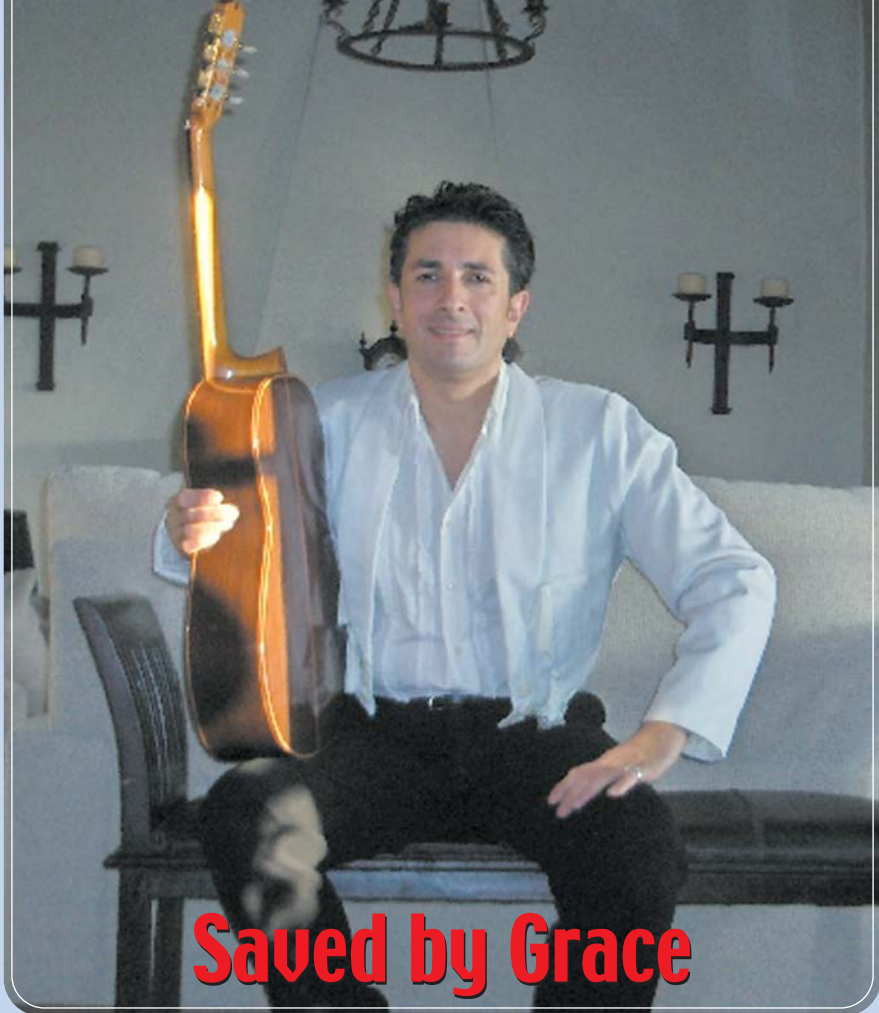
"I am telling you the truth: no man can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again."

This experience has brought Linda and me closer together – something I would not have thought possible. It has enriched our lives and added a new dimension to our marriage – it's like falling in love all over again.

I have changed my view on religion completely. If someone is arguing that there is not a God, ask him to read this and explain what has happened in the absence of a God. Coincidence is implausible. Finally, just because an individual has not found God does not prove there isn't one!

I know that I am at the beginning of my relationship with God and I feel very comfortable in that knowledge. Thank You God. Thank You.

Paul Barnes is an Actuary giving advice to Company Pension Schemes.



Esteban Antonio, Andalucia, Spain

I was born in Spain in 1962. At the age of three I saw Sabicas perform at the London Palladium. He was then the greatest Flamenco guitarist, the inspiration of Paco de Lucia. I decided that I would be a world class guitarist and composer too!

I started my studies on the guitar at the age of six but was learning music by ear at the age of four from LP's,

such was my determination! At nine I was the youngest guitarist to win a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. At the age of eight I performed on 'Young Music Makers', Radio Oxford and BBC Radio 3. At the age of eleven I was the youngest person ever to perform the formidable concerto Aranjuez by Rodriego.

Unfortunately the stress of raising money for my tuition took its toll on my mother Yvonne who died when I

was eighteen. Her untimely death destroyed my father and devastated my life. There seemed to be no chance of completing my studies at the Royal College. However providentially Tim Brighouse, a Member of Parliament, kindly organised my tuition fees. Shortly after this I was invited to Japan for a concert tour which launched me into the music industry world wide and later TV, films and the record industry.

I married my first wife when I was twenty-four in 1986 and got divorced in 1994, after spending many years as a lost soul in the music industry. I ended up working for many celebrities such as George Michael and earned up to £1,000 a minute session fee.

I was brought up a Catholic but when my mother died I walked away from church. I blamed God for torturing Jesus on the Cross and for not keeping my mother alive as she was a good person and went to church every Sunday. This caused me to look for God in other places such as other religions and later spiritualism, occult fortune tellers and tarot cards. Then I had an accident involving a large mirror which fell on top of me and badly damaged my spine.

I had met in the recording studios Debbie Holmes, an opera singer who was Head of Vocal Worship at Kensington Temple. She had been

praying for me. She came to see me and said that God wanted my music and would heal me. Despite her persistence I was not interested in hearing anything about God. I repeatedly threw her out of my flat.

The pain got worse and I spent most of the time in bed on painkillers. The Consultant at St Peter's Hospital told me I needed a cage put in the base of my spine. The S1, S2 and S3 vertebrae were irreparably damaged and I would never have the proper use of my legs again. At last I decided to give God an ultimatum.

"If you are real, heal me, and I will give you my life."

I called Debbie and with help was taken to meet her. She gave me some Scriptures to read including these words from Ephesians 2: 3-6, putting my own name into the text to make it personal.

'Esteban once lived among the disobedient in the passions of his flesh, following the desires of the flesh, and Esteban was by nature a child of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved Esteban, even when Esteban was dead through his trespasses, made Esteban alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised Esteban up with Him and seated Esteban with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

The vertebrae were irreparably damaged and I would never have the proper use of my legs again. At last I decided to give God an ultimatum.

I cried out to the Lord to come into my heart. This caused a Vesuvian eruption inside me. I let out a great scream and all the demons from my earlier occult practices were driven out. Then I received the Holy spirit and started speaking in tongues. Next I felt the hand of God reaching into my spine and straightening it. The sound was audible as my vertebrae popped open.

The next day I called my friends to tell them Jesus is real and to come and see me run up and down the road where I lived in Kensington. The hospital and my GP admitted it was divine intervention. I then gave everything away from my old life as when you are Born Again you are a New Creation in Christ Jesus, John 3:3. Books, CD's, money, furniture and lifestyle, all went. I was cut loose from the past and went to bible schools in USA and Spain.

I performed in 2001 in the film Chocolate with Johnny Depp, Lina Olin, Juliet Binoche and Judy Dench. I had the honour of presenting Johnny Depp with a guitar I had had made for him by the luthier Kif Wood. Johnny showed great interest and support for the International Music Schools in planning to reach young people.

In August 2001, I met my wife Erika who is a concert violinist and got married.

Sadly on August 31, 2004 my Father George Malinoff died after receiving the Lord Jesus in his heart on his deathbed.

The hospital and my GP admitted it was divine intervention.

My wife Erika's father is Janos Rajta. He is one of Hungary's greatest violinist's and composers. Her

sister Racine is also a concert violinist and has performed with many leading orchestras as soloist. In March 2006 Erika and I were blessed with a beautiful baby boy Giannini and now live in the mountains in Andalucia, Spain.

Our vision is to start International Music Schools for children throughout the world. We have the support of Spanish Ambassador Fernando Corral and the cultural office of the Spanish Government as we will have an Anti Drugs message based on Biblical truth. Our Vision is for underprivileged children to have the opportunity to learn music, hear the Gospel and discover the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are trusting God to provide the funding from a private or public source. It is His work and His children. Did not Jesus say, "Do not forbid the children to come to me?"

Esteban Antonio, with the patronage of Ambassador Fernando Corral, and the support of the Spanish Royal Family, is planning to build Music Academies/Social Centres worldwide where children from poor backgrounds can learn music.



God, You Are So Near

Jim Preece, Bolton, Lancashire

In June 1985 I was invited to attend a dinner of the Full Gospel Business Men in Blackburn. I had just retired from thirty years service in the

Police and had started in business. I went because I thought there might be some business contacts!

My wife came with me to the dinner where the speaker was Don Latham, a former Chief Executive of West Wiltshire District Council. I think I was the only person in the room who did not join Don in a prayer for salvation. But when he had finished he looked straight at me. I felt as if a bolt of electricity had hit me. Then I felt so clean and pure. I knew from that moment that there was a Father in heaven and that Jesus was who He said He was, God incarnate. Looking back I now realise I was experiencing a sovereign touch of the Holy Spirit.

Two nights later I woke up in the middle of the night coughing badly. I had been a heavy smoker for over forty years. I heard a voice in my head saying, "You have finished." I have never smoked since. The Lord then healed my wife of cancer and gave us peace through a very worrying time. On an overseas mission the Lord healed everyone we prayed for. In such circumstances it was impossible not to believe that God does exist and loves each one of us.

We experienced His love one dark night even before I was saved. I was driving home with my wife when I had a premonition that we were heading for danger. So I drove very slowly only to find the curtains

drawn in our house which I knew meant we had burglars. I ran round the back to find the patio door smashed and the house wrecked.

My garden spade was on our bed which I realised was meant for me if we had disturbed them. If we had arrived earlier we would have been in trouble. On another occasion our car was parked in the middle of a large housing estate. When my wife and I got into the front seats I found the car would not start. I got out to look under the bonnet and only then saw a little boy on his 'boggy cart' behind my rear wheels. Once I moved the boy the car started! I believe divine intervention saved

the boy's life as I would have reversed over him.

God has shown me many times how much He loves people. One day in Chorley Post Office I was irritated having to queue as I was in a hurry. As I looked at all the people I noticed a brightness in their faces. Then I felt an overwhelming love for each one of them. I realised God was showing me His love compared to my self centred irritation!

If people would just take the first step and accept Jesus into their lives they can be sure that He will never leave them and that their place in heaven is assured.

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Jim Preece is President of the Bolton Group of the Full Gospel Business Men.

Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International

Local Group Contact Telephone Numbers

Ireland

Athlone 00 353 902 93668
 Ballymena 028 9447 3227
 Belfast 028 9186 1535
 Craigavon 028 383 3377
 Donegal 00 353 74 9722812
 Enniskillen 028 6773 8346
 Killarney 00 353 66 7147327
 Limerick 00 353 61 312924
 Port Laoise 00 353 502 24434
 Tralee 00 353 66 9767366
 Wexford 00 353 53 70078

England – North West

Alsager 01270 878297
 Ashton in Makerfield 01942 730334
 Blackburn 01254 726630
 Bolton 01204 417804
 Chester 01244 675892
 Douglas – Isle of Man 01624 677051
 Eden Valley 01833 637035
 Heswall – Wirral 0151 605 0779
 Liverpool University 0151 709 4663
 Manchester 0161 794 5916
 Morecambe 01524 423711
 North Cheshire – Northwich 01606 781882
 Salford 0161 794 5916
 South Cheshire – Nantwich 01270 626897
 Standish 01942 245266
 Stockport 0161 427-5029
 Stoke on Trent – Ball Green 01782 876793
 Warrington 01925 490731

England – North East

Doncaster 01302 560789
 East Riding 01482 860043
 Goole 01405 760116
 Grimsby 01472 884311
 Halifax 01274 571863
 Hope Valley 0114 242 4004
 Hull & District 01482 845127
 Newcastle upon Tyne 0191 534 3485

Ripon 01765 606133
 Scunthorpe 01724 764827
 Selby & District 01405 869259
 Stamford 01780 753557
 Stokesley 01609 775134
 Teesside North 01642 679302

England – Midlands

Aylesbury Vale 01628 485937
 Bedford 01234 824112
 Birmingham 0121 351 3288
 Coventry 02476 720041
 Derby 0115 928 4869
 Forest & Wye 01594 529253
 Hitchin 01438 833525
 Milton Keynes 01908 521751
 Northampton/Kettering 07922 200352
 Oxford 01865 558557
 Shrewsbury 01691 653008
 Stafford 01785 714290
 Tamworth 01530 832291
 Worcester 01905 641742

England – East Anglia

Chelmsford 07801 275615
 Norwich 01603 250003
 Southend on Sea 01702 482363
 Waveney Valley 01493 700396

England – Greater London

Croydon 0208 660 9172
 East Molesley 0208 244 6328
 East London 0208 491 7229
 Finchley 0207 6072467
 Central London 0207 937 8668
 Lambeth & Southwark 0208 653 5294
 Potters Bar 0208 441 9895

England – South East

Crawley 01293 882411
 Eastbourne 01323 729786
 Gravesend 01474 356427

Maidstone 01622 743134
 Medway 01634 377965
 New Ash Green 01322 863171
 Sevenoaks 01732 353049

England – South Central

Basingstoke 01256 853040
 Bournemouth 01202 814514
 Chichester/Petersfield 01243 542111
 Dorchester 01305 266779
 Isle of Wight 01983 840313
 Guernsey 01481 247582
 Jersey 01534 855202
 Southampton 07973 549164
 Weymouth 01305 826864
 Wincanton 01963 31833

England – South West

Barnstaple 01271 373388
 Callington & Launceston 01822 870128
 Exeter 01392 459677
 Newton Abbot/Torbay 01626 774803
 Street/Glastonbury 01458 210367
 Truro 01872 241680
 West Cornwall 01326 574450

England – Severnside

Bath 01225 405021
 Chippenham 01249 651599
 Clevedon 01275 874477
 Keynsham 0117 986 2712

Wales

Abergavenny 01495 306568
 Anglesey 01407 760331
 Brecon 01497 847416
 Cardiff 01685 377971
 Conwy Valley 01492 572924
 Hereford 01432 840254
 Newtown (Powys) 01686 626438
 Port Talbot/Bridgend 01639 897993
 Presteigne 01544 267378
 Swansea & Llanelli 01792 893445



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 relationship with God by inviting Jesus to become their Lord and Saviour.

God loves and accepts you just as you are. He is able to turn any mess into something marvellous! To become a Christian and to receive the gift of Eternal Life there are three steps to take.

Step 1 **Admit** that you have sinned and need a saviour to deal with your past and to assure your future.

Step 2 **Believe** that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the Cross to pay the penalty for your sins.

Step 3 **Receive** Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life by personal invitation and ask His forgiveness for your sins.

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

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have sinned and am separated from you. But I believe you showed your love for me by sending your Son Jesus to die on the Cross for my sins. So I turn to you, Lord Jesus, with great thankfulness. I surrender my life to you. I ask You to forgive me for all my sins, to cleanse me from all unrighteousness and to send the Holy Spirit to live in me as my friend, my teacher and my comforter. I reject Satan and every evil spirit in the name of Jesus and I DECLARE the Word of God, “If the Son has set you free you are free indeed”. I DECLARE that Jesus has set me free from all my sins, from every bondage of Satan. I have been born again, I am a child of God, I am a new creation, I have eternal life, in Jesus’ mighty name. AMEN! HALLELUJAH!

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:

.....

..... 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.)



When God Sends an Angel

Nick Battle



My Journey to God

Paul Barnes



Saved by Grace

Esteban Antonio



God, You Are So Near

Jim Preece



Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International

PO Box · Freepost NATE560 · Knutsford · Cheshire · WA16 6BR

Telephone 01565 632667

E-mail: info@fgbmfi.org.uk Website: www.fgbmfi.org.uk

For your local "**empower men for life**" group contact:

