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## Path to a Miracle

Sometimes a leap of faith is one small step after another.

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November 1, 2011

Silvio\* sat on the living room couch, struggling to express in English what would have been difficult even in his native Portuguese.

"I-I just can't believe in God," he confessed. "Maybe, if, if he show me just ... what the word?"

"A miracle?" I ventured.

"Yes! That it. If he show me just a miracle, maybe I believe."

His girlfriend, Adriana, sat next to him not saying anything but looking at me with the same longing, searching quality that permeated Silvio's voice.

*Great, I thought. Now what am I supposed to do?*

### Leaps of Faith

My husband and I had both grown up in homes where believing in God came as naturally as breathing air. We met while studying at the same Christian university, and after getting married were heavily involved in our local church. Eventually, my husband accepted a position as an interim pastor in New Zealand.

We were the poster children for evangelical Christianity, but suddenly, over 8,000 miles away from home, we were drastically and dramatically in over our heads. Because there we sat, in our temporary living room, my husband and I on one side and Silvio and Adriana on the other, ordering a miracle. And despite my years of Bible studies, classrooms, and prayer meetings, I wasn't really sure if God would deliver.

Silvio and Adriana had taken leaps of faith before. Like when as a young couple in their early 20s, they had emigrated from Brazil to New Zealand in search of a better life. Or when they traveled around the North Island working in vineyards and orchards, getting only seasonal work but determined to make something of themselves. Or the time, after finally settling down in the small town of Hastings, they walked unsuspectingly into the little local church where our paths crossed.

Somehow, though, the leap of faith to trust in a God they couldn't see was beyond them. And so there Silvio sat, asking for a miracle.

### What Happened Next

Over the next several months, we found ourselves spending more and more time with Silvio and Adriana. After all, we were all strangers in this strange, beautiful new land. My background in teaching English came in handy now and again; and thankfully, with our 18-month-old daughter, language was never a barrier, giggles and tickles being the common vernacular. We attended local festivals, celebrated holidays and birthdays, and shared the joys and stresses of living in a new country together.

Slowly over those months, our friendship deepened. The initial nervousness melted away into familiarity. We became accustomed to their lilting, accented English, and they got used to our clumsy Americanisms. My husband and I quickly lost any delusion that we possessed an ounce of rhythm. Compared to Silvio and Adriana, we were bulls in a china shop. All the grace and passion of Brazil flowed naturally through their bodies.

Slowly over those months, Silvio and Adriana's faith deepened too. But it didn't come in the dramatic way any of us had expected. Instead of the impressive miracle that Silvio thought he needed, it came bit by bit, step by step. A question here, an occasional visit to church there. A hug, an unexpected drop in for coffee, and long conversations over slow dinners. Sprinkled among it all was a whole lot of fun, good times, and honest to goodness friendship.

## Steps on a Journey

None of us are exactly sure when it happened. Even Silvio and Adriana can't say for certain when they took that final step from disbelief to faith. But then one day, somewhat to everyone's surprise, Silvio and Adriana were standing in front of our small community of believers, and in beautifully broken English expressed an unreserved, certain faith in Jesus the Savior. At that moment, I realized that for them, coming to faith hadn't been so much one single, gigantic leap as it had been individual steps on a journey.

And maybe, just maybe, Silvio and Adriana weren't the only ones on that journey. Sharing life and the gospel with them had stretched me in ways I had never expected and probably required more faith on my part than on theirs. Faith that God wouldn't leave me hanging in the middle of an awkward conversation, faith that he still answers prayers, and faith that he uses ordinary, normal, everyday means to bring his children home.

Today Silvio and Adriana still live in New Zealand, where they've achieved the better life they were searching for. Soon after professing faith, they were married. Silvio began and completed a degree in draftsmanship, and they started actively reaching out to the international community around them. A year ago, God blessed them with twin baby girls.

My husband and I have since returned home to the States, but we brought back with us some significant lessons. One of the most important being this: Sometimes a leap of faith just isn't. It's one small step after one small step. It's extending yourself just beyond where you are comfortable. It's reaching out to someone so different from you that friendship seems impossible. And it's believing that, through it all, God has a way of working miracles.

\*Names have been changed.

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