



The Prague Christian Fellowship POST

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Mandy Barter, PCF Intern

Connecting

Coming to Prague and spending time with people at PCF, reminds me again of the uniqueness of the body of Christ; the fact that I have brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world and despite the fact that I can only speak English, we all have a common bond, Jesus. It is always a pleasure to pray and worship the Lord with fellow believers, but do we realize we have more than this, that we can share?

As relationships and friendships build, we earn the right to speak into each other's lives and I believe this is how God created us... to love each other, but more than that, to share ourselves, our hearts, at an intimate level. In his book, Connecting, Larry Crabb unpacks the idea that after twenty five years working as a psychotherapist, he is suddenly realizing the power of real friendship and standing alongside someone in their troubles, rather than trying to "fix" them. He says, "We must do something more than train professional experts to fix damage psyches. Damaged psyches aren't the problem. The problem beneath our struggles is a disconnected soul."¹ He spends the rest of the book explaining what this looks like and how we can connect.

This is how he explains it: "When two people *connect*, when their beings intersect as closely as two bodies during intercourse, something is poured out of one and into the other that has the power to heal the soul of its deepest wounds and restore it to health. The one who receives, experiences the joy of being healed. The one who gives knows the greater joy of being used to heal. Something good is in the heart of each of God's children that is more powerful, than everything

bad. It's there waiting to be released, to work its magic. But it rarely happens."²

It is a really powerful picture that he paints, but makes the point well, even if, it is a little uncomfortable to hear. He expands his idea by talking about each of us as part of the body, much like the 1 Corinthians 12 passage, but takes it one step further: "I want to see people connect with a few others as intimately as the various parts of my body work together, as cooperatively as my fingers are working together to write these words. With blood from one heart flowing through each finger and instructions from one mind controlling their movement, the job gets done. If one finger were to suffer a cut, my body would quickly send life-giving resources to the damaged site to fight off infection and help restore the finger to full use."³

Paul also talks about the body working together in this way in Ephesians 4:15-16. *He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Wouldn't it be awesome if the body of Christ, the Church, could work together this way? If as individuals we could build close relationships with each other that would really care if another was hurting and conversely, we would allow others to come that close to us, that they could care for us in that way. Ultimately this kind of relationship is risky, for both parties. Allowing someone to be that close to you means opening the door to your

heart, which means in return that they could hurt you or let you down. It also means they see the best and worst of you and this brings a risk of rejection that most of us fear. However if we allow God to work through us in this way, then I believe he will help us overcome!

"Releasing the power of God through our lives into the hearts and souls of others requires that we both understand and enter into a kind of relating that only the gospel makes possible, a kind of relating that I call connecting. This kind of relating depends entirely on deep fellowship with Christ and then spills over on to other people with the power to change their lives, not always on our timetable or in the ways we expect but as the sovereign Spirit moves."⁴

Of course there is a tiny bit more to all of this, than relying on each other and Jesus for our healing. We have to also take responsibility for our own actions. We need to be connected to Jesus through our prayer life and also by reading the Word on a regular basis, in order to stay spiritually healthy and have the right focus in our lives. This fellowship releases the power in our lives and enables us to help others. Time and again we hear stories of people who had powerful ministries and somehow or other, took their eye off the ball and lost

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Family Profile

Rosane da Silva



Hi! I am Rosane, a Brazilian lady. I want to follow Jesus and fulfill his calling in my life. Following my calling, I joined an organization called YWAM (Youth with a Mission). Through this organization in partnership with the local body of Christ I worked in my country in a poor community and with an orphanage. Later I went to Romania where I stayed for 4 ½ years to work with abandoned children and pro-life ministry. Here in the Czech Republic, part of my job is to learn the language. Also I serve in Teen Challenge (a Christian organization that offers help to young people trapped in addictions) once a week. Every Friday night I take part in an outreach called “Light into the darkness.” With a team we pray in the city and share the gospel, with whoever is open to listen.

How did it start?

I grew up in a good family. We

didn't know Jesus as our Savior but we were religious (in Brazil people believe in a combination of different forms of beliefs and practices. One day my middle brother prayed: “God, I saw a lot of religions, please tell me where the truth is, and whatever it is... I will follow.” In that week, somebody gave him a Bible. He started to read it and his eyes were opened to the truth. He understood that Jesus is the way to God and he started to follow Jesus and joined the family of believers. He was praying for our family and one by one in their own time came to know Jesus.

My story: At the age of 22, I was at the University and worked part time in a hospital. I was so proud of my religious beliefs that I didn't give any opportunity to my brother to talk to me about Jesus. I always said to him: “You have your own religion,” I didn't believe that the Bible was written by man and I was satisfied with my religion. But he said to me: “Rosane, it is not about religion, Jesus is real, I can talk to Jesus and He talks to me.” It was something that really moved me, but I still didn't want to listen to him.

One day, Maria, a new worker, started to work in the hospital, and we became good friends. One Sunday, she invited me to have lunch with her family. I went there and before lunch, her brother was sharing the gospel



with me, and asked me if I would like to receive Jesus as my Savior. I decided to say yes, because I thought: *We are just a small group of people, nobody will see it and I don't want to be rude*, so I agreed. The brother of Maria prayed for me and I started to feel so uncomfortable with my decision. When I was on my way back home, thinking about everything that happened, I heard Jesus' voice: “I saw what you did, I was there and I heard you say that you wanted me in your life.” I didn't say anything to Him in that moment. One night, a few days later I prayed: “Jesus, I know that Christians are different. I can't change my life in my own strength but I know you are able to change my life, please do it.” He really did it. I started to read the Bible, believed it and listened to His voice through the Bible. I desired to go to church, to pray, to get baptized, etc.

That Sunday was the most important day of my life, the first time I heard Jesus' voice and decided to follow Him. Jesus said: “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me*” **John 10:27.** ■

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everything. I don't want to be one of those statistics. As well as watching my own daily walk with the Lord, I would hope that those closest to me have now got permission to speak into my life and give me a hefty kick if I am straying or losing focus. This is the power of connecting for me. I have shared at the deepest level with a few, and probably still need to be a bit more honest about my failings, but those people truly love me. They have not rejected me. Yes, to start with it can be excruciatingly embarrassing, however, it also brings relief sometimes to share your deepest secret because you then know it won't be *found out*. You have shared it on your terms. It has also been my experience that in sharing at a deep level, you also sense the Father's pleasure. He is thrilled that you want to share your life with another, to ask brothers and sisters to walk alongside you in the dark places of your life, and ultimately shine His light and love onto those deep hurts. I believe that God created us to have fellowship with Him and if we are made in His image, then surely we should also fellowship with others in that way.

I want to finish this with a story from the book: "As I write this book, I am moving through a season of death. I've talked about it with a few, mentioned it to audiences, and allude to it now in this book. But *talking* about dying with others is vastly different from *actually dying* in the presence of another.

God is stripping me of much that I've depended on for my sense of well-being. The effect is a struggle with self-doubt and with questions about my usefulness that at times are overwhelming. The process of dying, I've discovered, includes a period after the old props have been kicked away and before the new foundation can be felt beneath my feet. During that period, the soul is ripped apart, filled with desolation and despair, made raw, lacerated. It longs for a healing that no one can

arrange. It is a season of absolute vulnerability before God. If He does nothing, there will be no Resurrection, only ongoing death, which no one can endure.

Only my wife knows the depths of my torment. And she stays. And a few friends are with me in the valley. A phone conversation with a friend connected me to his love. I found the courage to feel my despair when that conversation ended; the despair rose out of my depths and poured out in uncontrollable sobs. I allowed it to come, partly, I believe, because another friend was visiting with us and watching television in another room. He heard my tears, immediately switched off the television, came to where I was sitting, embraced me, and said nothing. I poured out my pain; he wept over my agony and prayed... As he prayed, I knew that life was in me. I sensed it. I knew a richer experience of that life was ahead... Because we died together, because we connected during the experience of death, we now live together. We experience fellowship in Christ, the real thing that only He can provide. The obstacle to connecting (the flesh) becomes our opportunity for deeper connecting when we recognize it and mortify it together."⁵

1. Larry Crabb, *Connecting*, Nashville, Word Publishing, 1997, p. xvi.
 2. Crabb, *Connecting*, p. xi.
 3. Crabb, *Connecting*, p. xiii.
 4. Crabb, *Connecting*, p. 5.
 5. Crabb, *Connecting*, p. 100-101.

| PCF Finances | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| December 2009 | |
| eBanka Account No. 181730394/5500 | |
| +138,578 | Total Income |
| 3,190 | Internet & Comm. |
| 4,612 | Office Rent & Electricity |
| 8,500 | Church Rent |
| 17,905 | Supplies & Equipment |
| 220 | Copying & Publishing |
| 39,128 | Salaries/Employ Taxes |
| 10,361 | Evangelism & Teaching |
| 37,000 | Church Giving |
| 3,340 | Fees & Advertising |
| 851 | Miscellaneous |
| 125,107 | Total Expenses |
| +13,471 | Net Income |

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.

Prayer Needs



- 1) Church Finances** – please pray for faithfulness of the community to tithe joyfully and wisdom in PCF spending and giving.
- 2) Current & Former PCF members involved with full-time ministry** such as John & Kelsie Mullen, Doris Rabus, Rosane da Silva, David Snell, Kelly Kuest, Sam Ewell, Michael Stadler, Will Porter, Andy Faust and Roger & Robin Harsh for God's total provision and protection in their lives. **"Always keep on praying for all the saints."** (Eph. 16:18)
- 3) Church staff** – Please pray that God would call some worship leaders to come help with PCF, CISP and IHOPP, and pray for a pastoral team to fill in this summer so John and Kelsie can spend their first summer in the States.
- 4) Outreaches**– please pray for God's leading and for homeless outreaches.
- 5) Retreat**—please pray for the upcoming PCF Winter Retreat being held during the first weekend of February.



Upcoming Birthdays

The following PCF members past and present will be having birthdays this month.

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Lulit Demissew | February 1 |
| Vince Reed | February 2 |
| Barret Kropf | February 2 |
| Kateřina Dreier | February 3 |
| Martin Kouklík | February 3 |
| Marina Proutkina | February 3 |
| John Kantke | February 4 |
| Phil Evans | February 4 |
| Marvin Lang | February 5 |
| Stephen Old | February 6 |
| Martin Žember | February 7 |
| Natasha Green | February 13 |
| Bogdan Pilch | February 13 |
| Michael Stadler | February 14 |
| Radana Bittnerová | February 14 |
| David Snell | February 16 |
| Tamara Nickle | February 20 |
| Kryštof Sedláček | February 21 |
| Chris McLaughlin | February 22 |
| Tom Valera | February 22 |
| Sue Furness | February 23 |
| Amy Mann | February 23 |
| Michelle Šebestová | February 24 |
| Lisa Niederheitmann | February 26 |
| Tamara McLaughlin | February 26 |
| Michael Overwater | February 27 |
| Mírek Šedivý | February 28 |
| Ariel Robbins | February 29 |



Atheists in the Czech Republic - Don't believe it

We've been told that the Czech Republic is the most atheistic country. What a statement. We've all heard it, statistics say that, right? No. First of all, statistics are not 100% correct. Secondly, we don't know all the details; what options people had to choose from. Thirdly, when the census was taken, I remember talking to several born again Christians who were afraid to admit their faith and church membership to prevent misuse of personal data.

I've been praying for my country, the Czech Republic, as long as I've been a Christian. God brought me home twice from living abroad and asked me to return to my homeland to serve Him here, to proclaim His promises and His truth over my land. We protect this country with our prayers, our words, and our proclamations are powerful. So you'd better proclaim the truth and not something that the media presented to you as a "fact."

Let me publish here a translation of an article written by Daniel Raus, the head of religious broadcasting department of Czech Radio 6 (Český rozhlas 6), "Co Čech, to ateismus." The full article can be read in Czech on <http://www.rozhlas.cz/nabozenstvi/zpravy/zprava/575094>.

—Markéta Lišková

We often hear that the Czechs are considered to be atheists. Is it true? Atheism is a term philosophically defined with which the research of public opinion has little in common. To what measure is atheism an attitude of Czech people, or is it just a confusion of terms?

So much has been written about the Czech atheism that many clichés have been birthed out of it. Firstly, the Czechs are the most atheistic nation in Europe (and possibly also in the world), only Estonians compete with us. Secondly every ordinary Czech is proud to be an atheist. It's the attitude of a mature, well-educated and focused person. Thirdly, the reason behind atheism is a difficult history of religious battles. Namely, we are the nation where the Thirty Years War began in 1618, and the source of all

our trauma is the Battle of White Mountain.

I don't want to oppose these arguments; certainly some of these clichés can bear some truth. However, in my opinion the Czech atheism is a little bit about something else. What's behind it is a reluctance to any form of organized religion. Spirituality, in our rebellious Czech minds is reserved to secrecy and should not be codified. And most importantly, when it is codified, then we don't want to be personally connected with such a form of expression. Our own opinion about the heavens (and what happens between heaven and our balcony) is our personal business.

The image of the Czech Republic as an atheistic country was primarily made on the basis of census results. The last one was performed in 2001. The results are not truly comfortable to an ecclesiastical eye. People were required to associate with a particular category, resulting in the *evangelicals* numbering only one percent. The *Hussite Church* is practically the same. And, if we added up all the *other Protestant churches*, it only totals about three percent.

The Catholics turned out pretty well with 27%, but even that success is relative when we look at other European countries (not even mentioning Poland). The real "blockbuster;" however, comes, when we ask what the Czechs actually signed up for. When we add together the category *no religion* and *nothing* (or *not available*) category, we get a shocking number: 68%. This then appears to be the superficial conclusion: If one is a Czech, he is an atheist.

Such interpretation, however, overlooks a fairly important fact: the majority of respondents defined those categories as such. Well, here in the Czech Republic after 400 years after the Battle of White Mountain we must start with the classical definition of terms. In fact that's where the confusion begins. We must ask, *what does an ordinary man/woman think the "no religion" category means? What is he/she trying to say if no box gets checked? And by the way, does he/she understand what the word "atheism" means?*

Some time ago, another survey appeared that found out to what measure the inhabitants of some countries are superstitious. Unfortunately, it only included Central Europe, but still, the results are extremely interesting. You find 23% of people in Switzerland checked the category *very superstitious*. In Germany there are about seven percent more. But nobody beats the Czech lands where we have almost half – 47 % of population, consider themselves as "very superstitious people." Maybe we Czechs have become a modern evidence of what was once written by the British writer / thinker, Chesterton, who said: "when people stop believing in God it does not mean they do not believe in anything - on the contrary, they begin to believe everything."

The "sleeping dog" (Czech- buried dog) lies even further. We can find it when we no longer look at churches but focus on the situation of political parties. It is shocking that two main parties: CSSD (Socialists) and ODS (Democrats), each have about 20 000 members. One of these parties thus always governs the country. Far less influence is found with KDU-CSL (Christian Democrats) – with 40 000 members. And surprise, surprise, the largest base is held by the Communist party of whom nobody wants to engage with for twenty years. Communists number (even with the gradual extinction) 60 000 people. Now the main thing: when you add together the politically organized people we get an incredible number – only two percent.

In this light the census results are not bad at all for the Church. One percentage of *evangelicals* and the *Hussites* is actually a success. The other three percent for *other churches* are wonderful. And 27% for Catholics... that is truly a miracle. No political party here even dares to dream like that. SO: People in the Czech Republic are interested in politics, but they do not want to be associated with membership in a particular party. Similarly, they are interested in spirituality, but without belonging to any particular church.

Therefore, are we Czechs atheists? I believe we are not. We just simply want to be "unclassified." This is the purely Czech category. ■

Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is February 20, 2010.