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“The Italian Pastor” Dominico, and Lee

Brussels, Belgium- I love the challenge of ministering the gospel in new settings that I have never experienced before. While it is true that people all around the world are the same in their need for love and acceptance (among other things), it is also a challenge to understand the behavior patterns and beliefs of people who live outside of our personal bubble of life experiences. If you get my drift, you may at times feel as I do when exploring new frontiers that not only challenge you culturally, but at times it seems that you find yourself ‘culturally challenged’.

The U.S. missionary to Belgium, Pastor Bert Phagan invited me to minister in his country of service. He took me to lunch at a Moroccan restaurant, a little hole in the wall that serves really tasty Arab food. I had the spicy chicken, and it was yum, yum good. The Moroccan owner asked me in French, how I liked my meal. Since I do not speak French or Arabic, I replied in sign language, touching my index finger and thumb together forming a circle. I communicated with an American, “A. O. K.” hand gesture. The restaurant owner looked perplexed and asked my host the question again, “He did like it, didn’t he?” Bert replied, “Oh yes he did!” I then learned that my hand signal in Europe means a zero, zip, a negative experience; not a good response to win friends and influence people. The old thumbs-up would have done the trick.

Then onto my next culturally challenging moment in Europe...The Italian minister, Dominico who is Pastoring a Spanish speaking church introduced me to his congregation before I stepped into the pulpit. He embraced me and then proceeded to kiss me three times, first on the right cheek, then on the left and then on the right again... he pulled back and asked, “you are a friend of Pastor Bert, aren’t you?” The kiss among Europeans signifies trust and acceptance and also that a meaningful bond exist between you and the other



person. I was flabbergasted that he would ask me that question. It was like the first kiss experience, you're never quite sure how you did. From his reaction, I obviously messed up, I don't know what I did or didn't do, maybe I came across too reluctant or who knows? I was too embarrassed to ask. I guess I'm just not a good kisser according to European men's standards.

The Good news is that our Lord pours out his Spirit despite our cultural shortcomings (no pun intended). In the churches where I ministered in Belgium, the altars were full as people



Juan Gonzales, (Left) Vida Internacional's Belgium representative

responded to the word. Another God thing that happened is that we now have a Vida Internacional representative in Belgium, Juan Gonzales from Argentina. He has been living in Europe for 15 years. Not only is he connected with Spanish Churches in Belgium, but also in several other European countries. Pray for Juan that he will plant many Bible schools throughout Europe. I saved the best news for last. There is a good possibility that Pastor Bert may, in the not too distant future, begin producing our courses in French. This would expand our ministry into the French speaking world! Places like Canada, Parts of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Europe. Prayer can make this a reality!

Together We Touch the World!

Ju & Carol

All contributions are tax deductible
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(Lee Short Ministries International)

Good News! Despite cultural shortcomings...

Brussels, Belgium



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