

Revival & REFORMATION

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Goodbye to the Past

By Andrew McChesney

For Vlad, life centered on money, money, money. He made good money when the Soviet Union collapsed and Uzbekistan emerged as an independent country in the early 1990s. During the day, he ran a small factory that churned out butter. At night, he ran an illegal poker business.

Vlad lived a high life with his wife, Marina, and they bought multiple apartments in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent. But then Vlad was caught and sent to prison because of his illegal business. His wife left him. Everything seemed to be falling apart.

In prison, Vlad thought about God for the first time. "If You help me, I'll believe in You," he prayed. "If You don't help me, I won't believe in You." One month and 18 days later, he was released from prison. He was a free man under a general presidential amnesty.

Vlad forgot his prayer and went back to seeking money. He got remarried and worked in South Korea for a while. Then he returned to Uzbekistan. His thoughts returned to God when his second wife, Alyona, started attending evangelistic meetings at a Seventh-day Adventist church in Tashkent. She invited him to go with her. After the meetings ended, they kept going to the church. For Vlad, life stopped revolving around money. Life started revolving around love — love for God and love for other people. Three years passed, and Vlad gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized. Then he began to work as a Global Mission pioneer, a missionary who shares the gospel to his own people. He shared the gospel with fellow Uzbeks. His once-large income fell to just a few hundred dollars a month.

A test of his new priorities came when he was contacted by his first wife, Marina. "We co-own three downtown apartments," she said. "Give them to me."

Marina had been living in one of the apartments. The other two were vacant. Vlad lived with his second wife at her mother's home. To change ownership, Vlad only needed to sign several documents before a notary.

"Fine," Vlad said. "Let's meet at the notary's office, and I will sign over the apartments to you."

The notary was brimming with questions. "Do you co-own these three apartments?" she asked Vlad.

"Yes," he said.

“Do you understand that they are worth several hundred thousand dollars?” she asked.

“Yes,” he replied.

“You are giving them to your former wife for nothing?”

“Yes.”

“How long have you been divorced?” the notary asked.

“Twelve years.”

“Where do you live now?”

“With my wife at her mother’s place.” The notary looked at Vlad with surprise. Marina frowned. She didn’t like the notary’s questions.

“What are you doing?” she said. “Don’t meddle in our personal business.”

The notary asked Vlad to sign an additional document stating that he was in his right mind.

Then she watched as Vlad signed the apartments over to Marina. When he had finished, she shook her head incredulously and turned to Marina. “While your former husband has this burning desire to give away apartments, ask him if he owns anymore,” she said.

Marina looked at Vlad. “Do you own anymore?” she asked.

“No, that’s all that I have,” he said. Then he asked her for forgiveness.

It was Marina’s turn to look at Vlad with surprise. “You’re crazy,” she said.

Vlad didn’t mind her sharp words. He left the notary’s office with a spring in his step and joy in his heart. He was happy to hand over the apartments. They were part of a past life without God. He didn’t need any reminders of his old ways.

Today, Vlad loves God and loves sharing Him with others. “God provides for all of my needs,” he said.

Andrew McChesney is editor for Adventist Mission.

World Church Prayer Requests

August 18 - 24, 2023

- Pray for those affected by the fires in Maui. Pray for healing, provisions, and most of all peace.
- Pray for the “Family Togetherness Week of Prayer” coming up September 3-9. Materials provided by GC Family Ministries.
- Pray for us to continue to have a heart of love like Jesus and that we would remain loving and loveable Christians no matter our circumstances or surroundings.
- Please pray for the Southern Asia Pacific Division and another nationwide evangelistic effort this August – “Christ for Malaysia.”
- Pray for our young people who live in countries where there is religious persecution. Pray that they would stand strong for the faith, and that they would be mighty witnesses for God’s glory.