

HUNGARY REPORT 2006

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Lacey's Spring
Nov 12, 2006

INTRODUCTION:

- A. After Jesus had spoken to the Rich Young Ruler emphasizing that there was a cost to discipleship, the apostles ask Jesus a very great question! (Matthew 19:27-30)**
1. They considered all that they had left behind in order to follow Jesus and so they ask, "Since we have left this all behind, what therefore shall we have?"
 - a. Those disciples had done what the rich young ruler could not bring himself to do, yet what reward would they receive for their sacrificial response?
 - b. Jesus emphasized the spiritual blessings they would receive in Him... One of those great rewards is being part of a great spiritual family... the body of Christ!
 2. At no point am I more aware and appreciative of the greatness of this family than when I am able to travel to distant places to preach the gospel... like Budapest, Hungary:
 - a. There you find a group of Christians who fight the same spiritual battles, often feel alone spiritually in this world, don't feel like they fit in, experience the same kind of joys and sorrows, fears & anxieties, & ask the same types of questions
 - b. Though separated by an ocean & thousands of miles these brethren are just like us spiritually! But what else would you expect from those of like precious faith?
- B. I want to take this time to thank this church for your support – both spiritually through prayers and words of encouragement and physically through financial assistance**

I. Introduction To Budapest & Hungary

A. The history of the nation of Hungary is both interesting and somewhat sad:

1. Hungary was formerly an Eastern Block country
 - a. It was founded in 896 AD by Magyar warriors in the Carpathian Basin
 - b. In 1000 AD the pope crowned Stephen as its first king
 - c. In the early 1800's, under the Hapsburg rule, Hungary had experienced its peak as in power and world influence – They revolted in 1847 and overthrew that rule
2. Later on the Germans came in and controlled Hungary; however, during WWII the United States came through the air and Russia on the ground and drove Germany out
 - a. There's still bullet holes in some buildings where the US fired at German troops
 - b. The US flew away; however the Russians stayed and controlled Hungary – The Hungary people lived under Russian rule and communism
 - c. The US urged the Hungarian people to drive out the Russians and promised help in the form of troops and military equipment
 - d. On October 23rd 1956 the Hungary people revolted; but, they did not receive any help. The Soviets came & killed 20K Hungarians in the streets of Budapest.
3. When the US goes to war we expect to win... but the Hungarian people will readily admit that their country has been on the wrong side of every war! This has taken its toll!

B. About the city of Budapest itself:

1. Budapest is actually two cities that are joined together to make one – Buda and Pest
 - a. Buda is where the old aristocrats lived and Pest was where the common man lived
 - b. For years the Danube River separated the cities but later bridges that were built would join the two together into one big city
2. The city has a population of around two million people!
 - a. That is half the total population of Alabama, more than three times the population of B'ham and & its communities, about the same size as Houston or Chicago
 - b. Most people there live in apartment flats – not houses like we are used to.
 - c. There are cars; but, most choose to use public since it is faster and cheaper
 - d. It is not uncommon to three or four generations of family members living together

C. The spiritual condition of the people there:

1. Most people who live there would not consider themselves to be very religious at all
 - a. In fact, only 6% claim to be Christians (very loose sense of the word) – Of that 6% there is only a small fraction who practice (again, loosely) what they claiming
 - b. Most people are either Catholic or Reformed (Calvinistic) – You don't see denominationalism there like you have here; but some probably exist
2. Naturally, if most are not religious at all sin and immorality has a grip on their culture!
 - a. I'm sad to say that some of this comes from American music and movies!
 - b. Most have little to no regard for modesty, living together is not only overlooked but is approved of, and it is a very sexually free culture
3. As a general rule Hungarians do not have a very positive outlook on life!
 - a. This is partially the result of the mark communism left behind, unstable political conditions, and the fact that they've been on the losing side of so many wars
 - b. While you see some younger Hungarians laughing, I have noticed that you don't see too many who are smiling or seem happy at all – Seem very downcast!
 - c. Sadly, Hungary has one of the highest suicide rates in the entire world!
 - d. While their past plays a great role in this, I believe their greatest problem is that they do not know the Lord! (**Ecc 12:13-14; Phil 4:4-13**)
4. One Christian remarked: "It doesn't sound like it's a very fertile place for the gospel!"
 - a. You could look at it that way I suppose, or you could look see 2 MILLION people who desperately need Jesus Christ! What a change the gospel could make!
 - b. Indeed... "Millions are groping without the gospel!" (Refer to the words of the song)

II. The Lord's Church And Work In Budapest:

A. A brief history of the work in Budapest, Hungary:

1. The work in Budapest began in 1991 shortly after the fall of communism:
 - a. It was began by Jeff Archer and Richard Copeland
 - b. Since then others have lived over there preaching: Jeff Belknap, David Bunting, Alan Yeater, Mike Thomley, Bill Bynum, Evan Casey, Hugh Walton, etc
2. The work in Budapest has experienced its highs and lows like most congregations:
 - a. There have been discouragements in the past that have caused difficulties
 - b. They've seen periods of growth as well as times where they've lost members
3. The church now has about 5 in regular attendance with others who sporadically attend

B. Now let me introduce you to some of the Christians who live there:

1. First Picture: Jozsef and his mother Maria (In Buhurnye... 4 hours south of Budapest)
 - a. Jozsef's father died in 2000 and his mother started praying that God would save her son... He found and started responding to correspondence course
 - b. He was very impatient as he had to wait on the mail to deliver his lessons and return the next lesson in the series... He was very eager to study God's word!
 - c. He was baptized in 2001 in a wood heated watering trough by Evan Casey
 - d. His mother, Maria, is a very humble, modest, and generous woman who loves to serve others... He baptized her into Christ several years ago
 - e. They are the only Christians within four hours of their home, so they rarely get to see other Christians... Yet they study and worship diligently! (See notebooks)
2. Second Picture: Yanos, Irene, and Alan
 - a. Yanos is 65 years old and is a solid source for strength in this congregation
 - b. He is a retired bus driver who enjoys gardening – He grows food for his family
 - c. A relative was handed an invitation to a Bible study, knew Janos would be interested, and gave it to him. Yanos came and later obeyed the gospel.
 - d. **Illustration:** When discussing advertisements for the church Tibor insisted on advertising in engineering magazines and Janos suggested personal fliers. Tibor said they would never work... then Janos, without a word, opened his wallet and pulled out the very one he received!
 - e. Yanos bikes or drives 2 miles to a train station then rides about three hours on a train and subways to get to services... Yet he is there faithfully w/o complaint!

- f. Yanos is very discouraged – A lack of growth in some of the members who have been Christians just as long as him, his son Latzy is in a mental hospital, and his other son actively steals from him. He was very down when we visited him
- 3. Third Picture: Klara Vathi
 - a. Was taught in 1997 & eventually led her sister Margit & neice Krisztina to Christ
 - b. She is struggling with her faith – It is hard for her to say goodbye to one family of Americans after another... She greatly longs for some stability in the church
 - c. She's single & lives an hour away from Budapest. She works for the railroad & is studying law. She is having vertebrae trouble that may require surgery
- 4. Fourth Picture: Monica
 - a. Came a couple of years ago with Maria, a friend. They both obeyed the gospel; however, Maria has stopped attending, but Monica continues to attend
 - b. Her childhood was very difficult... she was tossed from house to house. She too is struggling to maintain faith in God. She has a charismatic background
- 5. Fifth Picture: Edit
 - a. Not sure exactly when she obeyed the gospel. Her husband is not a Christian and has little interest. He comes with her, drops her off, and goes to play pool
 - b. She recently had a baby girl named Esther – Maybe this will spark interest in him
- 6. Sixth Picture: Peter Nagy and his girlfriend Kaytlin
 - a. Began studies with David Bunting in 1994 and obeyed the gospel in 1996
 - b. He works as our translator when there – He speaks Hungarian, English, Italian, German, and Spanish. He can be so busy translating he misses the message
 - c. He has not been very strong over the past few years... showing little growth since he first obeyed the gospel. However, on this trip his interest seemed to be revived and he showed great love and concern for others as we dealt with some interrelational problems. He even recognized his blame in the situation.
- 7. Seventh Picture: Emese
 - a. Is very energetic and happy ... this stands as a great contrast to many Hungarians
 - b. She too obeyed the gospel about 10 years ago and has continued faithfully; however she still could grow some more in her knowledge and commitment
 - c. She spent the most amount of time with us showing us around and serving as our translator as we were out in public.

C. Our work in Budapest this time:

- 1. Our main focus in this trip to Budapest was to strengthen the brethren:
 - a. Jesus showed this as an aspect of evangelism when He gave the great commission – They were to teach, baptize, and teach more **(Mat 28:18-20)**
 - b. When Paul preached the gospel & people responded churches were established in various cities... He later revisited them to strengthen them **(Acts 18:18-23)**
- 2. There are several factors that have contributed to their need for strengthening:
 - a. First of all, they live in a city of 2 million people and only know of 5 or 6 people who are actively trying to do what is right – They spoke to us about this struggle
 - b. They've had several who were once part of their number go back to the world
 - c. Bill Bynum who had preached there a couple of years has recently moved back to the states. They have been without a preacher for a few months and in the search for a new preacher personal relationships were strained & feelings hurt
 - d. Most of those Christians have not been growing as they should nor have they had the commitment they should have... This problem needed addressed as well
- 3. Our studies with the brethren while there:
 - a. We decided a good book to do lessons/lectures from would have been Philippians... our focus was their heavenly citizenship and finishing strong
 - b. Also while there we did three lectures from Romans 9-11 on Israel and God's plan for the Jews. We also discussed what our attitude toward the Jews should be
 - c. Finally, we talked about Hebrews 11 and what the kind of faith that God is pleased with and will overcome this world looks like – Paralleling the Philippians study

4. We made sure we spent a good amount of time with the Christians individually:
 - a. We took a trip to Buhurnye (almost to Croatia) to visit Jozef & Maria (all day trip)
 - b. We spent a lot of time individually with Emese and Peter – Tried to bridge some hurt and encourage them to further service and growth... This was successful!

CONCLUSION: Look at this picture... what do you see? What do you think God sees? Please pray for these Christians, the spread of the gospel, and for people to obey its message!