

From 🇷🇺 Russia

After watching my brother suffer through Latin I determined to take Russian instead. The state of Baden-Württemberg had four pilot schools that offered Russian starting 9th grade. *I could be a spy!* 🕶️ For our field trips we went to Moscow, Leningrad (Saint Petersburg), and more exotic places like Petrozavodsk, Murmansk (snow ❄️ in July!), Samarkand, Buchará, Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Odessa (Ukraine). 🇺🇦

Senior Class Trip - and a suitcase full of Bibles!

But the highlight was our Senior Class trip to Siberia. We took the Trans Siberian Express from Novosibirsk to Irkutsk (Lake Baikal) and Khabarovsk (a 3,000-mile trek! 🗺️).

And I smuggled Bibles. 🕶️

I gave most students on our trip a Bible to carry across the boarder in their suitcases, and then recollect them once we got through security in Moscow. My suitcase was already filled to the max with Christian literature. At Sheremetyevo airport passport control 🛂 made the guy in front of me open his suitcase. Откройте ваш чемодан! *I thought this was it. I was done.* What if I had to open mine?! After a quick prayer on my part the guard looked at my passport, then looked at it again, and ... waved me through! I delivered Bibles in Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa, Irkutsk, and Khabarovsk. *The joy of the people to receive the Word of God!* After the fall of the Soviet Union the pastor of a church in Siberia came to visit me in Stuttgart; we loaded him up with ten suitcases full of evangelistic material!

I caught the underground mission bug and took Christian materials into the Soviet Union several times, and a camera for Amnesty International. In Siberia they hand-typed hymnals under heavy carpets so no one could hear them. Pastors imprisoned for not sending their kids to school on Saturday. Got to re-trace some of those steps with my oldest son later on. 🗺️

Life-changing experiences.

With ❤️ Love

G O D . . .

I have always been amazed - and in awe of - God. God!

In 2014 I found myself on a top-tier denominational committee. Little me, and the big names of Adventism! Tired of the issue at hand I had asked God for the next big topic to study - and voilà! A scholar declared in my hearing that "God does not have a son!" I was startled - and vowed to learn about God the Father and His Son. *Little did I know that this would profoundly change my life - and career!*

In the solitude of my office I devoured Scripture (in Greek!) and discovered John 17:3; 1 Cor 8:4-6; Eph 4:4-6. The clearly monotheistic introductions to all of Paul's letters. I was stunned. I had caught myself in the classroom (while talking!) that my standard explanation of God as a Trinity (1 God = 3 Gods = 1 God) made no sense, nor was it found in the writings of Ellen White - nor was it taught in over 130 years of Adventism! The classic texts (Mt 28:19; Jesus' baptism; 1 John 5:7-8) didn't teach the doctrine of the Trinity at all! **!!**

After years of study and wrestling with Scripture (and with self!) I came to the conclusion that my baptismal vows from 1986 were correct indeed: "I believe in God the Father, His [divine] Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit." Period. Simple. Biblical. *No Trinity mentioned.* Note: Trinity ≠ Trio ≠ Godhead

In the summer of 2018 I had to resign as Professor of Religion at my university (and from the church plant where I pastored pro bono). My 25-year denominational career came to an end - literally overnight.

One administrator commented: "Ingo, you might be right, but we have to protect the institution."

The end of a career (and sadly, many friendships) but I am grateful beyond words - and love God more than ever, uplift Jesus as His Son, and pray for the Holy Spirit daily as I labor in self-supporting ministry.

In hospice ministry (loved it!) I developed a visitation protocol of **Love** (no matter what), **Listen** (with 2 ears), **Learn**, **Lead** (as appropriate), and **Leave** (something behind - especially little stuffed animals!). ❤️

I now focus on educational presentations (head), nature photography (If you like what He made you can love Who made it - #Rev14:7!), a creation-based relationship program called 422B1 (heart), and foreign aid to education, health and ministry endeavors in Uganda, South Sudan, and Israel (hand). And on loving people. Life is hard enough.

To God be the glory - great things He has done!

... is good.

S O F A R



M Y S T O R Y

Life

Bible

I always thought the Bible was a special book, though I didn't understand much of it. In secular high school in Germany I carried it for the teacher (brownie points!) from the teacher's lounge to the classroom and back. Sadly, Lutheran Confirmation classes did not feed my heart and spiritual interest - but faithful Christians around me did.

One Sunday Ken, my Texas host father, took me to a yard sale. I got a \$5 bicycle, put new brakes on it, and ... got my first English Bible! Jack and Nancy Gibbons gave it to me and I started devouring it, reading it after homework each night for hours, cover to cover. I even developed my own concordance on the back pages!

Church

Two weeks before my year in Texas came to an end a thought flashed through my mind - I wanted to get baptized! I rode my \$5 bicycle to the Keene SDA church and knocked on a side door. The youth pastor (Thank you, Pastor Phil!) opened and he explained everything to me for 2 hours! I was baptized on May 31, 1986, during Keene camp meeting. I was elated! But what an adjustment for my poor parents in Germany. We hardly spoke a word on the way home from Frankfurt Airport. And I had school on Saturdays! I finally mustered up the courage to go to my principal and request Saturdays off. *My knees where shaking! Approved.*

Calling

After taking the MCAT for med school I enrolled in ... theology at Eberhard-Karls-University in Tübingen, Germany, studying Latin (!), Greek, and Hebrew. Finally realizing that secular theology had no future in my life, I went back to Texas and finished my degree at Southwestern Adventist University, pastored in Texas (thank you, saints, for your patience!), got my MDiv at Andrews, and then taught at my Alma Mater - Southwestern Adventist University - for almost 20 years. *Loved the students.* I also received a PhD in New Testament studies from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary - what an arduous journey while teaching full time and raising a family, but it taught me so much.

Family

I married my Texas Highschool Sweetheart - Nancy 💕 (we wrote letters for almost 7 years!). We raised a wonderful family of two bright boys - homeschooling, traveling, camping, music, church planting. #family #love

Bon Voyage!

EXCHANGE STUDENT . . .



. . . FROM STUTTGART TO TEXAS!



I was born in Marburg, Germany, and grew up on the campus of the largest Braille Institute ∴ in Europe where my dad was an engineer. We also lived in Buxheim, Bavaria, where I rerouted creeks and climbed trees 🌳, and then moved to Stuttgart (home of Mercedes and Porsche 🚗). What a great childhood! No TV, lots of family time, hiking in the Alps 🏔️. Austria. Switzerland. School, sports, friends. (Classical) music. 🎵 Concerts. Travel. Bike tours. Grandmas (no grandpas). Uncle. Berlin. Munich. England. France. Family! Grateful. *Note: It's hard - and awkward - to write about yourself. But maybe it'll help someone in their life's journey. 🙏*

TURNING. POINTS.

Close Call

I hesitate to start here, but it was such a key moment in my life ... I was maybe 13, 14 years old; on a Saturday night I watched a fight in downtown Stuttgart. When police 🚔 broke up the fight a man next to me invited me to a Coke (nice man!). He then suggested we go for a walk. Schlossgarten, by the main train station 🚉. He had his arm behind me on a park bench, and then offered me 200 Deutschmarks 💶 if we went behind the bushes and ... My blood froze. My head was spinning. Mind you, I'm a teenager without church, sermons, Bible studies, week of prayer, summer camp. Time froze. But I needed to decide. After what seemed like an eternity ⌚ I ... got up and left! *The direction my life would have taken ...* 🧑

Glow Tract!

1985. It was a Saturday morning. My dad and I had gone to an openair market when a man handed me a pamphlet about Jesus and relationships. I tossed it in a corner in my room. Just before leaving for America as an exchange student my parents made me clean up my room (parents!) and I found the pamphlet! I read it with my heart and right there in my room knelt down on my carpet and gave my heart to Jesus! And I prayed to God that he would send me to a Christian family. *He did!* 🙏

Exchange Student

August 21, 1985. *Welcome to Texas!*

I was supposed to go to a family in Fayetteville, Arkansas, but since I was allergic to dogs I was rerouted to a family in Keene, Texas and attended Cleburne High School as a Senior. *What an experience!*

America! 🇺🇸

Keene, TX 76059

Since my host family didn't eat pork (vegetarians!) and attended church on Saturday I first thought they were Jewish! I had never heard of "SDAs"...

I will never become a Seventh-day Adventist!

Ken and Joyce Williams welcomed me with open arms. What a loving home and church family. I went to church almost every Sabbath (except for the one where I stayed home and listened to Pink Floyd out of rebellion 😡 - "We don't do laundry on Sabbath" I was told). Eventually I wrote a friend in Germany that I didn't think I would ever become a Seventh-day Adventist. *There. In writing!* 🙌

Dale 🏍️

One day I was jogging on Old Mansfield Road in Keene when I heard a motorcycle behind me - it was my host brother Dale. (For my 18th birthday he took me to California and told me "If you don't make up your mind about God you'll never make it!"). I waved, only to receive a phone call from the Joshua Police Department 🚓. He had been hit by a station wagon and was careflighted to Harris Hospital, downtown Fort Worth. Intracranial pressure. Pints of blood. He died 24 hours later. *My world was shattered.* 😞

His room. Empty. Silent. I played Schubert Impromptu G-flat major at Dale's funeral and people kept saying, "Dale would have enjoyed that." *Would have?!* After Keith Dobbs showed me 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 something started to click about death as a sleep. Little did I know that some 20 years later I would write a 50-page research paper on that very text for a doctoral seminar at the Baptist Seminary - *they came alive!* #sleep #resurrection