

Finding Christ in the midst of disaster

By *Chuck Thompson*
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Kurt Buhlmann became an entrepreneur at age 26 with dreams of being “very rich as fast as possible.”

Today, he has a different focus that’s centered largely around giving. How he got there is an amazing story that involves a great downfall, tragedy, major financial losses, and the ultimate gain.

Born in Zurich, Switzerland, Kurt grew up in a family of five boys and went on to study banking, marketing, communication, and advertising.

Along with one of his brothers, he went to Geneva, in the French-



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speaking part of Switzerland, to enter the real estate field.

Fourteen years later, he had two children, Raymond and Catherine; a fortune of 50 million Swiss francs; 300 employees; a large house; expensive cars; a 10-ton sailing yacht, and a 12-ton motor yacht.

“I lost everything: my fortune, my companies, my first wife, my reputation” — KURT BUHLMANN

He traveled throughout Europe by helicopter to play golf, and under his office he had a climate-controlled wine cellar with 100,000 bottles of very expensive wines.

Then, in the late 1980s, a law change brought real estate prices down overnight, setting the stage for Kurt to lose everything. But during this time God brought a businessman to Kurt who led him to Christ.

“I lost everything: my fortune, my companies, my first wife, my reputation,” Kurt says. “But I won everything: the faith in Jesus!”

Five of Kurt’s seven business partners died of causes ranging from heart attacks to cancer to suicide. But in Christ, Kurt found a solid rock amid the shifting

sand and discovered the strength to carry on.

Because he had cosigned with his business partners, in violation of the Scriptures, he was left with 100 million francs of debt following their deaths.

“Wonderful things happened to eliminate this debt, including debt forgiveness by the bank, a buyout by another business person, and the realization of a big real estate project in 2004/2005 that included 77 apartments,” Kurt says.

Isaiah 45:1-3

Prior to this time, Lis, who would later become Kurt’s second wife, moved from her home country of Denmark to Switzerland, where she married. In time, her husband left her and their two children, Benjamin and Vanessa.

She cried out to God for help, and there was more than one occasion when she and her children saw Him multiply the food in their house.

With God’s help, Lis, a hairdresser, was able to open her own salon. For 12 years she would pray for a new husband whose life was directed by the Lord—a person like the one described in Isaiah 45:1-3, one of her favorite Scripture passages.

Eventually, Lis entered a prayer group at an evangel-

ical church in Nyon, near Geneva. Kurt and his daughter were members of the group, and when he saw Lis, he immediately fell in love with her.

“Then, a wonderful thing happened,” Kurt says. “The widow of the businessman who had shown me the way to Jesus gave me a paper printed with the words of Isaiah 45:1-3. She said, ‘Kurt, this is for you. My husband had it in his office and thought it could be for you.’”

Kurt showed the paper to Lis, and she showed him the paper on which she had written the same passage. They were married in 2002 with the aim of serving the Lord, sharing their testimony, and encouraging others to see the greatness of God.

New life, new direction

Through the influence of financial teacher Earl Pitts, of Canada, Kurt began to learn a biblical model for finances. And, through Campus Crusade’s Horst Reiser, who would later become Crown’s representative in Switzerland, he was introduced to Crown.

He arranged five Crown small groups in his church attended by 40 people, and since that time, several hundred people have participated in these groups.

Kurt and Lis present French and German lan-

guage seminars on finances in Switzerland, France, and Germany, and he is president of a prayer intercessors group of more than 1,000 people that prays for people in authority.

He serves on the committee of an organization that places Bibles in railway stations, commercial centers, and other places around Switzerland.

And, he is president of a Christian foundation with a building in Aubonne that provides space and coaching for almost 20 enterprises and organizations.

Each year, through the foundation, a new small company is created and coached. The most recent one is dedicated to helping people who are coming out of debt.

At the time this article was written, Kurt had received a gift of 450,000 francs toward the purchase of a new office for the foundation in Lausanne.

One of his passions is to teach young people about finances, which he believes is the most powerful way to bring them into a relationship with the Lord and to a greater level of faith.

In the meantime, Kurt is still dealing with some debt as a result of cosigning. When his remaining two business partners died in 2005 and 2008, their debts also fell on him. Kurt recognizes that he must reap



Kurt and Lis Buhlmann

what he sowed, but he is confident that an arrangement with the bank and the help of God will allow him to be free of these obligations, as well.

Future goals

Kurt is excited about the release of Crown’s *God Provides™ Film Learning Experience*, which he plans to use as a teaching tool in Europe.

In addition, he hopes to create 50 Crown small groups per year, provide biblical training for young business people, create new biblically based businesses, and show others the benefits of investing in God’s Kingdom.

“Lis and I are determined to change the situation here in our region,” Kurt says. “Christians must become the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:15, 43, 44). I believe that very hard times are coming and that we must be prepared in order to be a blessing to others—to give others the desire to know our great God.”