

## MY STORY – PIERRE BOULANGER

I was originally a farmer, happy and yet unhappy. Happy when I was working with my machinery and livestock. And yet at the same time in the depths of my being dissatisfied and depressed, without understanding why; seeking answers in a headlong rush: ever more, ever bigger...

Raised in "the religion of my fathers" and in extremely strict Catholic boarding schools, I was still an altar-assistant at 29 years of age. In my times spent alone I would think about the creation and the creator whom I'd always believed in. But there was still something missing: this God who was so amazing was silent, or at least I thought, towards me. If only I could hear him speak!!!

One day I came across another farmer who showed me a book which I was unfamiliar with – the Bible.

"This book has changed my life", he told me. A few weeks later I received an invitation to a Bible study to be held in my fellow-farmer's kitchen. I would have travelled 100 miles if necessary, impelled by an invisible hand.

On three consecutive Wednesday evenings I was present at something I was totally in the dark about – a Bible study based on the book of Revelation followed by a time of prayer. But the Holy Spirit confirmed to my own spirit that here was to be found the truth I was looking for, without realising it.

On Wednesday February 17th 1971, during the time of prayer, I felt compelled to cry out to God. I realised that there was a barrier, a veil, between Him and me, and I told Him so. The pastor explained to me that this was normal, and that sin was the obstacle that had blocked up the path back to God (Isaiah 59.1). After several long minutes of spiritual struggle I asked God to forgive me and to grant me a new heart. An enormous weight and a depressive spirit left me at that very moment, to be replaced by God's peace. I started attending the church's meetings.

On Saturday April 10th 1971, the day before Easter, the pastor had organised a time of prayer and fasting. About 3am, someone prayed for the Bible colleges, while someone else prayed for people to be called into Christian work. At that time, I was totally ignorant as to what this was all about. The following day, Easter Day, after the service, I felt the need to pray because I had a burden on my heart that was impossible to explain. There and then, whilst praying, I knew that God wanted me to serve Him, far away from this Breton farm. But how was I to break the news of my departure to my aged parents, leaving them to care for the livestock and the land? The pastor of the church had always been very careful to avoid putting any pressure on me, but knowing exactly what I was doing, and compelled by the same divine hand, I filled out the inscription form for the Emmaus Bible Institute in Switzerland. In early October 1971, at the age of 31, the ex-farmer was going back to school!

Easter 1974: A few weeks only from the end of the 3-year study course, I still wasn't sure of God's will for my future. During a mini Gospel campaign in Tavannes in Switzerland, I went into the little Protestant chapel with a prayer burden on my heart. I was led to the Bible on the lectern which was opened at Ezekiel 3.11: "Go to the captives, to your people: you will speak to them, and whether or not they listen, you will say to them: Thus says the Lord God". The message was clear: "Go back to your own people in Brittany"...

On my journey back from Switzerland, I stopped off at Dinan where there was at that time a Christian orphanage. It was there that I met the woman who would some months later become my wife. She had come from her native Charente 3 years earlier, approximately at the same time I had left Brittany for Switzerland....

We have served the Lord in Brittany, then for 11 years in Normandy, then once more in Brittany where we now live in retirement, near "my people" still rebellious and captive (Ezekiel 3.11)

