

“This book exceeded even my high expectations. I knew Martin and Petro de Lange before they went to Turkey as a young missionary couple, with an earnest desire to share the love of God with the people of that land, willing to give their lives in a foreign country because they were faithful and obedient to the call of God.

“The book is written in such a captivating way that I could hardly stop reading it. This real-life story will appeal widely and will undoubtedly touch many lives.”

Dr Isak Burger

President of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

“We urgently need books about Turkey, one of the most unreached nations in the world. Martin and his family have served Jesus in the country of Turkey for thirteen years. This book deserves your attention. Please get extra copies to give to your friends. Use it to mobilize urgently needed prayer and action for Turkey.”

George Verwer

Founder of Operation Mobilisation

Belinda Lamprecht grew up in Australia, but felt God's call during university to head to South Africa. Since then, God has led her on an amazing adventure; she has dabbled in children's ministry, taught communities about HIV and AIDS, worked in schools, lived in a township, got married and become the mother of two children.

THE EDGE OF PARADISE

Turkey is beautiful. But for Christians
there is always a price

Martin de Lange
with Belinda Lamprecht

MONARCH
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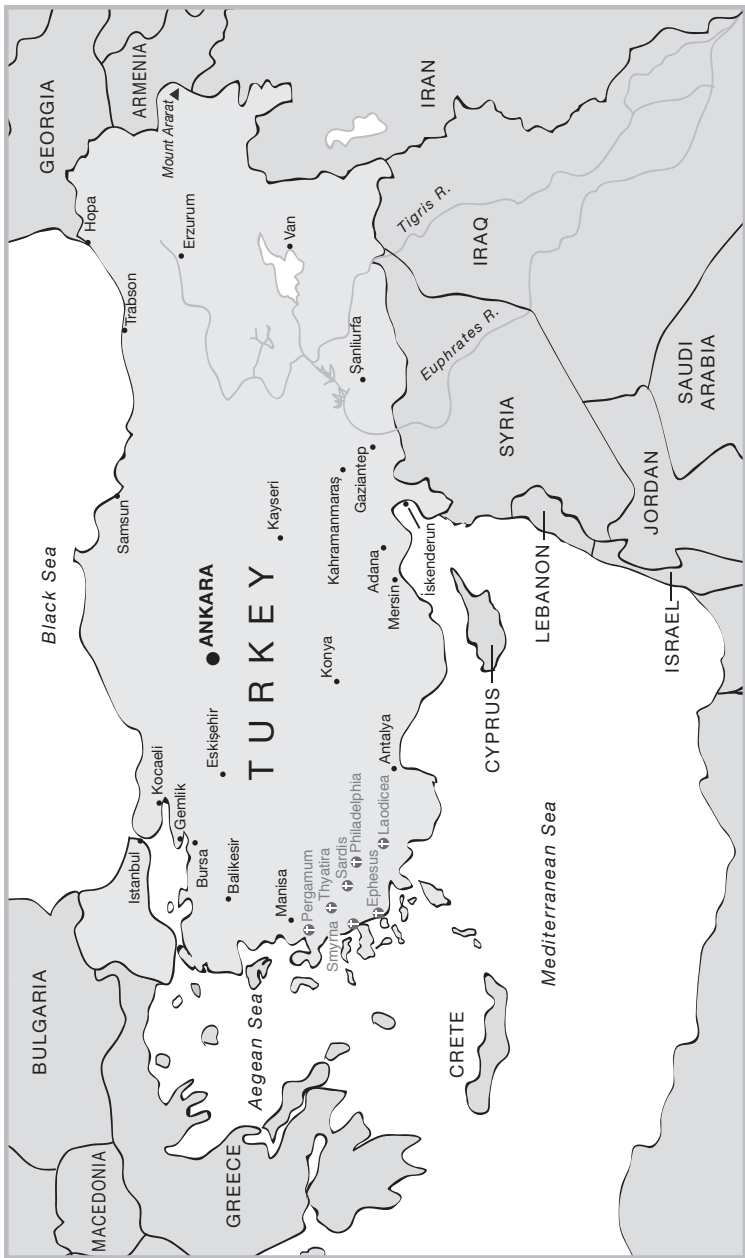
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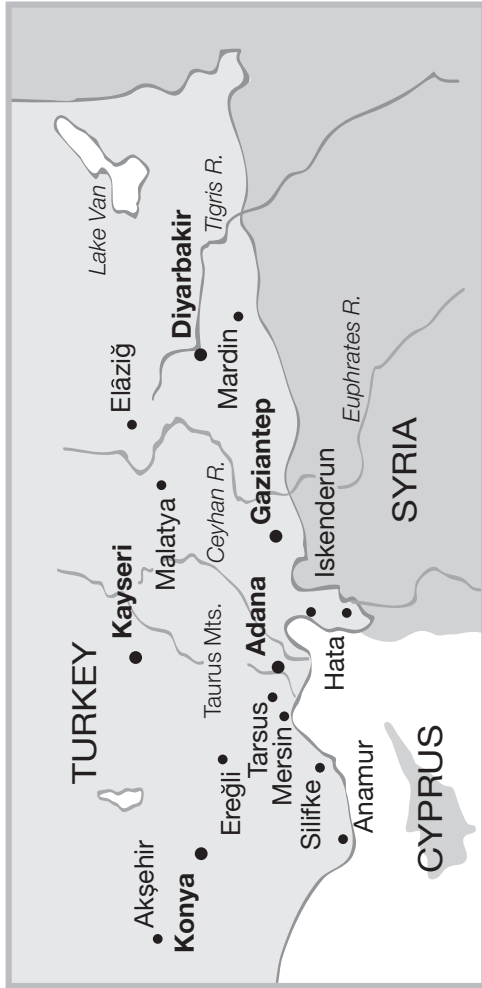
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Map of Turkey



Regional map of South-East Turkey

Thank you

*Petro and the boys for your love,
patience and support.*

*Belinda for putting all my notes into
a gripping, flowing story.*

*OM South Africa for releasing me
from ministry to finish the writing.*

Foreword

During October 2010, 4,200 Christian leaders from 198 countries around the globe gathered in Cape Town, South Africa, for the third Lausanne Congress on world evangelization. As the leaders listened to God and one another, they celebrated what the Lord was doing in the world and spent time to reflect on what the critical challenges for the church in the twenty-first century were. These leaders all agreed that one of the major priorities for the global church was that of discipleship.

The Edge of Paradise, detailing the experiences of Martin and Petro de Lange, is the story of lives lived in radical discipleship. It is a story told in raw honesty, mixed with humility. Not many leaders are willing to make themselves vulnerable by revealing personal feelings and experiences, but in this book Martin does just that. He shows us how to live a life of faith and courage, yet at the same time he is acutely aware of his own human shortcomings. I was impressed by his honesty in describing not only successes, but also disappointments and even failures. Throughout he acknowledges and emphasizes the role the grace of God played in his life. Ordinary people like me can relate to this, and are inspired by lives lived well for God.

I remember well how absolutely grief-stricken Martin and Petro were when they heard of the murder of their friends and colleagues in Turkey. This showed me the deep level of love and care they had for the people to whom they committed their lives.

I have known the de Langes for seventeen years and have seen them live the story told in this book. I believe their example is one to be emulated by the church in Africa and around the world. The book will be an inspiration to those of both this and the next generation who wish to dedicate their lives to spreading the gospel. It highlights the wonderful fact that we, on the continent of Africa, have developed from being simply recipients of the gospel to being part of the global mission force carrying it forth.

One of the criticisms often leveled at Africans is that we do not write enough. Here is a book written by one of the sons of Africa, and it is a proud moment for us. This is a book by one who has dared to live on the edge. It is a well-chronicled story, well written and yet easy to read. I believe you will be encouraged and inspired to dare to dream with God.

Enjoy the read and then share the story with others!

Peter Tarantal

Chairman: Wensa (World Evangelization Network of South Africa);
Southern Africa Director: Mani (Movement for African National
Initiatives)

Preface

The eastern part of Turkey is a dry and arid land. Between towering, craggy mountains, strong rivers are born, beginning their journey down to the south of Turkey and then on, into Iraq. This area was historically a part of Mesopotamia, a region mentioned several times throughout the Bible and famously bordered by two mighty watercourses, the Tigris to the west and the Euphrates to the east. The same two rivers are traditionally recognized to have formed part of the boundaries to a far more ancient place, the Garden of Eden – Paradise.

For a number of years, my young family and I lived just fifty kilometers to the west of the Euphrates River, in the city of Malatya. Geographically, it was as though we were living right on the edge of Paradise. The momentous significance of the region would often strike me anew as I crossed this river, going about my work of planting churches and distributing the Bible in some of the very areas where both church and Bible had been born, ages before.

The reality of the danger in which we lived to carry out this work was never far from my mind. Not receiving a fixed income, we trusted God to provide all our needs. At a time when

negative attitudes towards Christians, and particularly Christian workers, prevailed and were fostered by the government, we never knew what harm might befall us. We worked in faith, facing every day the real threat of suffering, persecution and death. We lived never knowing when we might be called upon to take the final step across the boundary of our earthly lives into eternity.

We lived on the edge of Paradise.

This book has been written as a tribute to three of my co-workers and best friends: Tilmann Geske, Necati Aydin, and Uğur Yüksel, who paid the highest price for their faith in the Lord Jesus, as they labored faithfully for Him. They entered Paradise, giving their lives for what they believed in and as a sacrifice to Him whom they loved. With this book, I want to honor them, as well as those they left behind.

Chapter 1

The poor guy beside me was already turning green, and the autopsy had hardly even begun.

I was nervous myself, but there was too much riding on this for me to lose my cool. Despite all the training and preparations my buddy next to me and I had been through together, our initiation into the Special Crime Scene Investigation Unit of the South African police force would not be complete without successfully passing this, our first ever post-mortem examination. There had been all kinds of pressure and ribbing from our senior officers the preceding week. They had made some scathing predictions about who would last the longest, and which of us would make a hasty trip to the bathroom to lose our breakfast. However, that morning I arrived at the Pretoria Provincial Hospital morgue with the same hard-headed determination to prove people wrong with which I usually faced life.

My colleague groaned softly and hurriedly stumbled back towards the gauze-covered swing doors as, with the dull whine of an electrical saw, the professor began to open up the skull of the big body lying on the steel table.

“One down,” the professor muttered into his cloth mask,

with a quick glance at my retreating friend, “one to go.”

I was not going anywhere. My initial hesitation faded as I watched, with a sense of wonder, how the skilled physician began to expose the thin outer membrane enveloping the brain and spinal cord of the body before cutting into and examining the brain itself. After the chest had been sawn open in the same way, each slippery organ was removed from the body cavity and weighed. There, in the good professor’s hands, were the very components that made up my own living, breathing body. I was fascinated.

I had always enjoyed pulling things apart, seeing how they worked, modifying and improving them where possible. One of my earliest memories was of lying underneath my go-kart, tinkering and toying (and swearing, when appropriately frustrated) just like my dad did with his own big car; but here, in this dead man’s gaping chest, was a mesmerizing engine far more complex than anything else I had ever witnessed before.

“You still here?” the professor finally asked, wiping his hands on his apron. “You’ve lasted longer than they usually do. You sure this is your first time?”

It *was* my first time, but it wasn’t going to be my last.

I joined the South African Police Force in 1984, when I was just seventeen years old, urged to do so by a couple of friends that I had from way back in primary school. I was not the type of person who was easily persuaded and was more likely to stick to my guns stubbornly in any argument, even when wrong, than comply just to please someone. In this particular situation, however, out of loyalty to my friends and not really knowing what I wanted in life, it didn’t seem to be a bad idea to do what they had suggested.

It was a decision which turned out to have been guided by Providence in disguise. I discovered a real passion for police

work and the discipline, ingenuity and sometimes recklessness required to succeed appealed to me. Even better – I was actually good at it. My work with the forensic unit was varied and, at least as far as I saw it, always incredibly exciting. When on duty, I would speed, sirens blaring, to the scene of violent crimes – murders, suicides and fatal accidents – where, if I were the first to arrive, I would cordon off the area and take note of any potentially useful evidence. My trusty Ricoh camera went with me everywhere in a large aluminum case with all the necessary accessories. It was usually my responsibility to take photographs of anything that might be of potential interest to the scientists and lawyers who would eventually deal with the case. Footprints, broken glass, hair and blood sprays were all captured on film through my wide-angle lens.

Over time, I became quite intuitive about knowing what to look for and learnt to spot the tell-tale signs of foul play. I recall one occasion when I was called to the scene of what had been reported as a fatal heart attack in a suburban home. A man lay dead in the bathtub while his wife, pale-faced, but resolutely composed, answered questions put to her by the police in the entrance hall. Regulations determine that all instances of people dying of what appear to be unnatural causes be investigated by the police. Thus, it happened that another detective and I dutifully examined what appeared to be an innocent incident; yet something was amiss.

“Do you notice the color of his skin?” I asked my partner, as we stood back, assessing the situation. He looked at the fellow, sprawled out in the bathtub and then back at me before agreeing that something was definitely wrong. When someone dies, gravity takes over and the blood tends to collect under the skin at the lowest part of the body. This man, however, despite having supposedly died sitting upright in the tub, was covered

in cherry-red blotches all over his body.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning?” my partner asked, the realization hitting us both at the same time. We were both familiar with the unique skin coloration indicating that someone had died from toxic exhaust fumes. “Then that would make this a set-up!”

The evidence from the post-mortem and investigation of the crime scene later indeed revealed that the man’s wife had hit him on the head with a shovel and dragged him to the garage, where she gassed him in the family vehicle. She then lugged the body back to the bathroom, for what she imagined amounted to the perfect crime. This proved the saying often used in the cop shows: “People lie, but the evidence doesn’t!” I loved this part of my job.

Those were turbulent times in South Africa. Apartheid, the political system of “separateness” that had been enforced by the government years earlier, was now an entrenched part of South African society. Where you were allowed to travel, what jobs you could do, where you could live and attend school and even whom you could marry were all enforced by law and determined by the color of your skin. In the decade of the 1980s in which I became a police officer, we increasingly saw violent clashes between those in power, represented by people like me, and those who had been oppressed for many years. There were weekly news reports of bombings, attacks and fiery conflicts in the townships and sometimes I would have to attend the scenes of vicious disputes in the course of duty.

There was no denying the horror of what I had become accustomed to seeing while on the job day after day. Betrayal, abuse, devastation and deceit confronted us regularly; but to me, the horror of some aspects of the job could not compare with the joy of piecing together the puzzle and trying to bring

to light what was being hidden in darkness.

Not everyone, however, shared the same enthusiasm for my career of choice. “You smell like death,” Petro, my wife, once muttered in disgust as she pulled back from embracing me on my return from work. She headed back to the kitchen, glancing over her shoulder with a scowl. “You smell like death, Martin – again.”

It was probably true. I had investigated a dreadful case that day: a supposed suicide that had left a young, beautiful teenage girl dead on the living-room carpet with a bullet wound to the head, a handgun held limply in her hand and a mother, bewildered and screaming, in the dining-room. Yet, upon investigation, we had discovered gunpowder residue not on the girl’s hands, but on her mother’s.

My relationship with Petro was tumultuous, to say the least. She was my childhood sweetheart, the most gorgeous woman I had ever met, and as pragmatic as I might have thought I was, our love was of the “at first sight” variety.

She, with her long blonde hair and striking green eyes, was a member of the high school marching band and I played lead drum in the band. I doubt she would ever have noticed a guy like me – greasy and pimply in the unflattering drummer’s uniform – but I guess my friends had seen me making eyes at her, because it wasn’t long until, in true adolescent style, the dares began. I endured a few weeks of relentless teasing until I finally worked up the courage to follow her home from school one day.

That was about as far as I got for four days.

Eventually, having honed my stalking skills for close to a week, I managed to corner her on the way home from school one afternoon, introduced myself and asked her out to a movie. It was the craziest thing I had ever done, but sometimes,

desperate times call for desperate measures.

I will never forget the way the surprised expression on her face faded, revealing a daring grin, before she accepted my brave proposal with a quick “Okay, as long as you ask my mother!” and flounced her way home. Her mother, although reluctant at first, gave her permission, and Petro and I made our first public appearance as a couple during the next weekend. We dated for several years before I again, with hands shaking and sweat beading on my brow, asked her another question, this time with a gold ring to seal the deal. Ever the suave gentleman, I rented not only a trendy white tuxedo, but also a stretch limousine, for a classy night out in town. Over dinner at the State Theatre in Pretoria I gently asked her to marry me and to my amazement she agreed, a bright smile lighting up her face.

However, as I now stood in the hallway of our Pretoria home, still hurting from her remarks about my police career, I realized that our relationship was no longer as harmonious as during those first few blissful years. Despite loving each other deeply, we struggled with conflicting flaws of character. I was stubborn at the best of times and this, together with low self-esteem, gave me the proverbial “chip on the shoulder”. She was insecure and felt a pang of jealousy whenever I happened to glance at another woman. She would withdraw from me, absorbed in her own private hurt. For my part, I would sometimes explode in anger, once getting so infuriated that I managed to smash the windscreen of our car with my bare fist. Despite our problems, we took our vows – in which we committed ourselves to each other in marriage – seriously, especially in view of the fact that they were made before God.

Petro and I had both grown up in religious homes, with

church attendance and involvement in the local congregation a deeply ingrained part of our lives. For South Africans of my social background in that particular era, Christianity was almost more of a cultural exercise than a personal matter. Every Sunday, Mom would scrub the children's faces, smooth our hair and then, dressed in our finest threads and with cheeks still stinging red, we would be escorted down to the local church. My sister and I attended Sunday school with all the other children in our area and faithfully learnt our weekly Bible verses, but I don't remember the gospel ever meaning much more to me than simply obeying God's rules, turning up at church whenever possible, and keeping my face clean.

That all changed when I was about seventeen years old. Ironically, I was attending a course on evangelism when the Lord finally pointed out to me what salvation was all about. As the guest speaker explained in simple terms how we could communicate the good news to others, God broke through to my stubborn heart and it finally all made sense. I went home after class, got down onto my knees and made a commitment to the Lord Jesus to follow Him. Suddenly, God was no longer an abstract concept to me, but a very real and close friend, guiding me in my daily life. Petro, whom I had already been dating for some time, soon made the same commitment to Jesus. Completely transformed, we became sold-out "freaks" for Jesus. There was nothing we wished for more than to dedicate our lives to God in the same way that Jesus had done.

Somehow, though, despite having followed the Lord for so many years, things were not as clear-cut now, both spiritually and otherwise in my married and working life, as they had been in our youth. Sighing, I followed Petro into

the kitchen, where she was unhappily rinsing lettuce under the tap in the sink. I leaned against the doorframe and watched her for a while, sensing the tension in the air, but not sure how to resolve it.

“What am I supposed to do, Penguin?” I pleaded, resorting to the endearing nickname I tended to use in tense moments like these.

She didn’t reply, still concentrating on the lettuce, but responded to my remark with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

“I can’t just quit my job. We need the money, and I would never be able to find something else that pays as well. Anyway, if I didn’t have that work camera there is no way we could make all that extra cash on the side taking pictures at weddings...”

She glanced at me over her shoulder for a moment, a slight smile playing on her lips as she raised an eyebrow at me. “Those fancy brides wouldn’t pay nearly so well if they knew that, only hours earlier, you’d been taking pictures of corpses with the same camera.”

“I don’t plan on telling them. Do you?” I quipped, wandering over and planting my hands on the kitchen counter next to her. I turned to her again and more seriously said, “I’m good at my job. And I’m pretty sure the Lord is happy with the influence I have on the other officers in the force.”

It was true. I was upfront about my faith with my colleagues, and downright brash on occasions. I had even been known to corner a superior every so often and clearly explain to him the need for repentance and faith in Christ. God gave me great boldness in speaking out for Him to the people with whom I worked, as well as disciplining a few new believers among them.

Petro nodded. “Just consider it, though. What if the Lord wants to do something new in your life? Let’s just say I wouldn’t

be all that unhappy to have you home some evenings and to get rid of that awful stench which follows you everywhere.”

“Fair enough, but He’d have to tell me pretty clearly if He wanted me to be convinced!”

Little did I know just how seriously God intended to take me at my word.