

Richard and Sarah's story – treasure hunt: Barnstaple (interviewed by Wendy Mann)

Wendy: Rich, I know you and Sarah and family were on holiday in Tiverton in Devon and you had quite an incredible encounter on the streets...why don't you tell us how it worked out?

Richard: Yeah, sure. Basically, I woke up one morning and saw a 'picture' of a signpost with the word 'Barnstaple' on. I clocked that I recognised that name from before because it's on the signposts around where we were, but hadn't thought that it was somewhere nearby. I put it into my iPhone and looked on the map and it said it was about 30 minutes from where we were. I then simply forgot about it, but later on that day I had a 'picture' of a German flag as well, totally out of the blue, unrelated to anything, and I thought, gosh, is God calling me to Germany?! What do I do with that? Then I again duly forgot about it and the next day God reminded me of both of those things again. We were due to go to Exeter that day for a trip out, doing a bit of shopping, which Sarah was quite excited about and I thought, I'm going to have to tell her that I feel God's saying we need to go to Barnstaple to check it out – maybe God's giving us a heads up about a fun day out that we wouldn't have at Exeter. She wasn't too sure as she really wanted to go to Exeter but she said, if you feel God has said this, we should go. I was a bit apprehensive thinking, is God going to actually do anything there, I've just got a German flag. I was talking to Sarah about it and she said, do you think they are treasure hunting clues, as you normally get clues like that from a series of categories, and I thought possibly they were, so I started to pray a bit more. I felt like I had a pain in my right knee, so I clocked that – and we went to Barnstaple for the day. We got there, had coffee and then went for a walk around town to see if we could see a German flag because that's what we were looking for! There were markets and stuff like that, and we looked to our right and there was an open market with stalls that had national flags above them. I looked at Sarah and she looked at me and we thought 'Ooh', starting to freak out a bit thinking, we're going to have to do something now! We walked down and hovered around the stall area and I was asking God who I should go and talk to. I felt him say, there's a lady with a red jacket that you need to go and speak to. I waited for someone to turn up with a red jacket and then lo and behold, the attendant had a red jacket on. I went up to her and introduced myself really nervously, because we weren't on an official treasure hunt, it was just a random day out of our holiday. I said I was a Christian, that I was on holiday with my family and said, this is going to sound really mad to you but I felt that God said to me this morning that I should go to Barnstaple to meet someone of your description under a German flag. She was really taken aback; I asked her about the right knee and she said it wasn't a pain she was feeling right then but a recurring injury, and she was really worried it was going to cause problems of arthritis later. So I was able to pray for her and then she said, do you think you could also pray for more 'general' things? I pursued that a bit and said, is there anything a bit more specific and not so general? She didn't want to open up too much but as we talked she started to tell Sarah about the fact that her husband had recently died and as a consequence she was finding it really hard to believe in God. Sarah did a really good job of connecting with her and when we left her we could tell that she was really touched by it all – it was a really good encounter, totally out of the blue!