



“I  
followed  
God to  
Russia.”



PAUL SCHROEDER

In the midst of my life as a comfortable Christian I was one day approached by a special woman named Suzy Gaeddert who told me I should join a team from Bonhomme that was about to embark on a journey to the orphanages of Russia. The challenge made me think about what it meant to be a Christian and to face my fear of going someplace where I didn't know the land or the people. Long story short, my wife, two of my daughters and I departed with the team and soon entered an old barracks-like building in Vologda, Russia filled with children from 3 to 17 years old.

I could not speak Russian and the children could not speak English but through interpreters I was soon able to build a relationship with the timid group of 4 and 5 year olds with which I spent time that week. The Russian children in this particular orphanage were somewhat of the outcasts of all the orphanages, with some having special needs. By the middle of the second day of our "camp" the ice was broken and I suddenly became more like a grandfather to them. Little hands and fingers grabbed for mine and squeezed for me to follow them here and there.

I have pictures from this first trip of 2006 and remember the names of those kids to whom I got close. They are special memories that changed me and how I live my faith. Saying yes to Suzy's challenge to go helped put me on a path of more yes's as I have returned to the orphanages of Russia seven times. I have gone to bring hope and encouragement to children stuck living in an institution for the duration of their childhood, but on every trip it has been me that was the one most blessed by the gentleness, humility and love that the children shared with me. My God has been most gracious in calling me to spend myself on these children. Glory to Him.

