



**GATECRASHING**

# GATECRASHING

*The Story of 24-7 Prayer in Ibiza*

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*In loving memory of James Michael Godward, a great servant to Ibiza  
and beloved friend and inspiration to us as a family.*

*To Ellis and Dan who came along for the ride and made it richer,  
deeper and loads more fun: this story is your story. Gracias mis hijos!*

*And to Abby and Charlie Clayton, writing the next chapters of God's  
story for Ibiza – we're so thankful you came.*

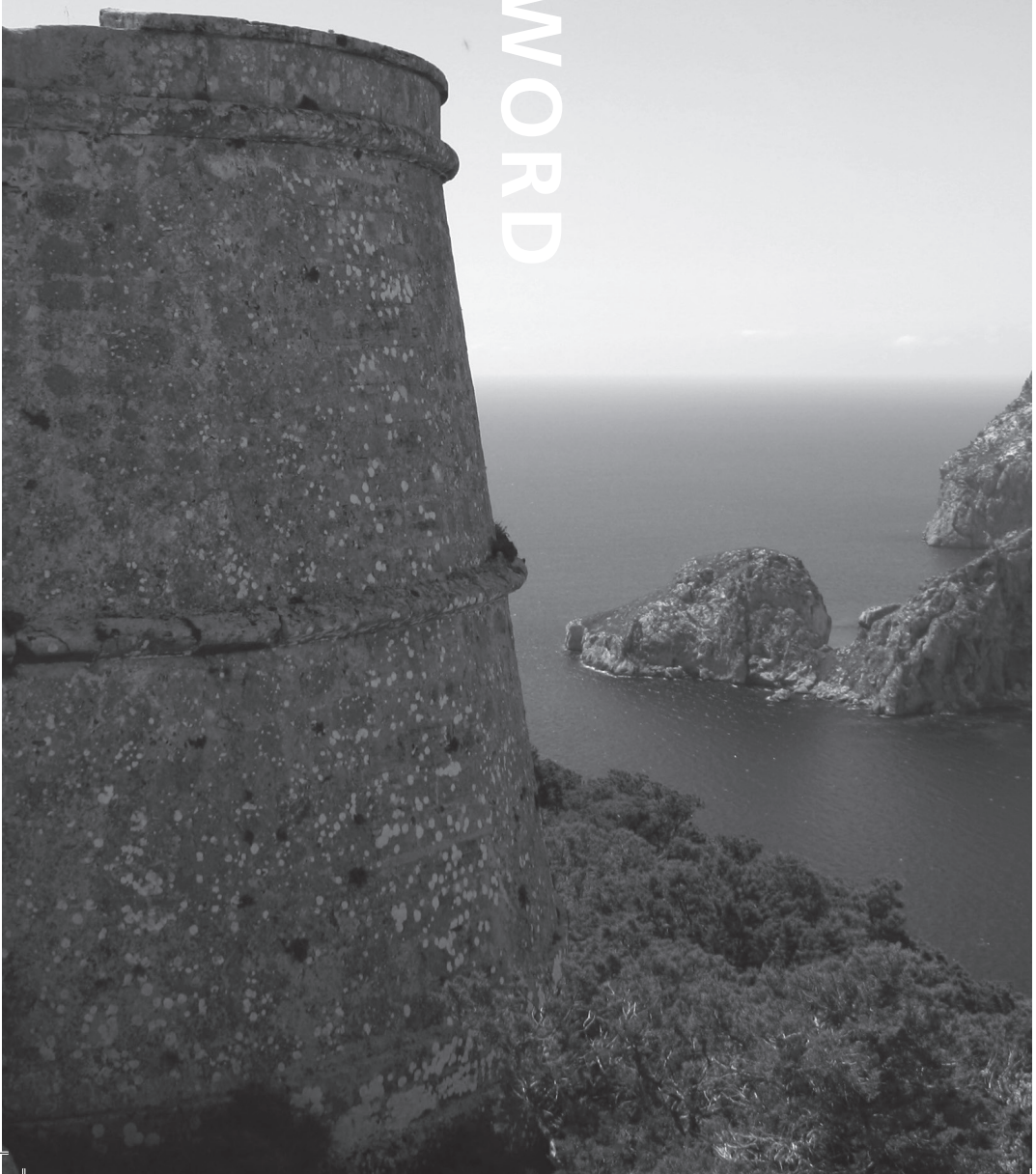
*Tracy this book is your book. It has my name on the front but it was  
written by both of us. You are my sunshine.*

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# FOREWORD



# FOREWORD

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I remember exactly where I was when I read the tabloid headline: ‘SODOM & GOMORRAH’, it shrieked, name-checking those two infamous biblical cities, synonymous with extreme depravity.

The article went on to describe paralytic drunkenness, drug-fuelled sex, and a date-rape epidemic in and around the pubs, clubs and streets of San Antonio, Ibiza. It was heart-breaking. Thousands of young party-goers seemed to me to epitomise both the lostness and creativity of a generation, looking for fun and finding something else.

I knew that some Christians – maybe most Christians – would share the disapproving tone of the newspaper article, but hadn’t Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah? And Jesus told a parable about God’s love for a son who partied too hard. He refused to condemn the woman caught in an act of adultery. He reached out to those in the sex trade; and wept over a generation that was lost ‘like sheep without a shepherd’.

‘God,’ I prayed, clutching the lurid newspaper, ‘please – if this is you – open a door for us in Ibiza.’

Life moved on, and a few weeks later I was at a conference talking to a lady at the end of a meeting when she said something that took my breath away: ‘I want to invite you to send a team to the island where I live. There are not many Christians. We pray but we feel overwhelmed. The island is called Ibiza.’ I blinked and nodded slowly. At that moment the door swung wide and I knew that God was beckoning us in.

And so we sent our first tentative team to San Antonio to ‘spy out the land’. They came back with stories of creativity, beauty and opportunity mixed in with the depravity described in the newspaper article. So we sent another team: clubbers, prayer warriors and a couple of Christian DJs. They rented villas, went nocturnal, partied and prayed, enjoying the music and reaching out to those who had collapsed in the street, helping them get home safely, drinking only water from bottles to protect themselves against the pervasive ‘date-rape’ drug, Rohypnoll.

For several summers we sent 24-7 teams to ‘pray, play and obey’ on Ibiza. There were miraculous answers to prayer. A television documentary, ‘*God Bless Ibiza*’, was viewed by almost a million people. *Rolling Stone* sent a journalist. Teams kept going. The needs kept growing. God kept answering prayers. It became clear that we needed to establish the work long term. We’d never believed in ‘hit and run’ evangelism. The mission urgently needed year-round presence. But who could head up such an extreme challenge? They would need to be mature, solid Christians who could still relate to young, drunk party-goers. They would have to be flinty pioneers capable of building the mission from almost nothing, and yet they would also need to be people of deep prayer. Worst of all, we had absolutely nothing to offer them. No money. No infrastructure. No home. Just an open door in a place that the tabloids called ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’.

Brian and Tracy Heasley rose to that challenge and pioneered 24-7 Ibiza in ways that outstripped everything we could imagine. The story of how God sent them from a village in Norfolk, England to the club capital of Europe remains one of the most dramatic callings I’ve ever heard. They raised their sons, learned Spanish, led teams onto the streets night after night, reached out quietly, befriending bouncers and club owners and the rich and famous alike until 24-7 Ibiza became trusted as the fourth emergency service on the island. Brian and Tracy also established a drop-in centre with a permanent prayer room, they opened their home continually, and planted a Boiler Room too. The Heasleys are two of the most remarkable leaders I’ve ever known and their story, recorded here, is a timeless testament to the power of answered prayer.

When I think of the work in Ibiza, I remember the way that the Salvation Army deployed stretcher-bearers to carry the drunks home from London’s streets in the 18th century. And I think of C.T. Studd, the England cricketer who gave away his fortune and went as a missionary to China, explaining that, while

‘Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell;  
I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.’

I am so grateful to Brian and Tracy for their sacrifice and for taking the time to write this brilliant new book. As you journey with them



through its pages you will be amazed at God's faithfulness and consequently your own faith will grow. You will also learn important principles about contextual, cross-cultural mission, not from academics on the conference circuit but from practitioners who have paid the price night after night, on their knees in the prayer room and in the gutter too. This book will also help you understand the vital relationship between intercessory prayer and incarnational mission and the way that prayer itself can be a paradigm for evangelism.

I hope that you will be inspired to pioneer, to take some even bigger risks, to abandon yourself afresh to the Great Adventure of God for your life. Brian and Tracy's story will also provoke laughter, because the journey of faith is often hilarious, full of the happy-accidents that make life colourful.

I will never forget commissioning Brian and Tracy in a London church at the fifth birthday party of the 24-7 movement. Standing in front of a large crowd I asked why on earth they were giving up a safe life leading a growing church in an English village to go to Ibiza without any security at all. I knew that Brian had many great things he could say in answer to that question. Inspiring things. Intelligent things. Things that might be strategic in drumming up a bit more support. It was a soft pitch of a question, and all Brian needed to do was hit a home run. He opened his mouth to answer, but nothing came out. And then he began to weep. Tracy held his hand tight and he just cried.

Everyone understood the meaning of those tears.

The Heasleys maintained that soft heart through many subsequent years of quiet service, mostly away from the spotlight, being yelled at, puked on. And worse. Praying when no one was looking, late at night. Worrying about their boys as all parents do. Enduring the isolation of the long winter months.

And when eventually it was time to come home, Brian and Tracy did it well. There is no lasting success without successful succession, and the Heasleys raised up the next generation who have taken the baton and are growing the mission to a remarkable next level.

Sometimes today, when I ask Brian about Ibiza, he still weeps. No words. Only tears. All these years later. May you sense those tears as you read this book. May you feel them and even share them. May the God of all compassion break your heart, earth your prayers in

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the dirt, and enlarge your vision beyond the bounds of normal. And may the Lord Jesus who took on flesh two thousand years ago, invade and disrupt our lives again today, gatecrashing our complacency with tears.

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BY SPECIAL INVITATION

# BY SPECIAL INVITATION

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We left the prayer room at 3 am to walk and talk and see what was happening: within 10 minutes we got offered various drugs on four different occasions – don't know what that says about how we looked!

We then saw a couple having sex on a walkway: loads of people were just walking by and some guys even stopped to watch – it was a very sad and disturbing sight.

We got a call and took a drunk guy back to his hotel in the van, we had a good chat with his two mates.

As we headed back to base, we got stopped by a worker who asked us if we would pray with her, we stopped and prayed with her in the street.

All in all, our little walk only lasted 55 minutes – it's amazing what you can see in that time. We then returned for another intentional encounter with God in the prayer room.

We shared our experience with some of the other team members. I really felt for the girl having sex with that guy in the street – it was so degrading, I'm not judging but just sad. Sad that what should be a beautiful act of intimacy and oneness has been so degraded.

We prayed to get a little more wisdom and understanding as to how to work with this whole area: we struggled to know how to engage with it. Should we have gone up to the couple and asked them to stop? Was it any of our business? Should we have asked people not to stop and stare? Should we have called the police? Lots of questions... This journey often leaves us with more questions than answers, but we laid them all out before God.

After that time of prayer, we ventured back out on to the streets and decided to drop into a club, and pray there. Inside the club on the dance floor there was a group of lads in the middle of the crowd. They had

T-shirts on with comedy names on the back – most I can't repeat here but what really caught my eye was one of the guys had 'Jesus' written on his T-shirt and another had 'Sex God' written on his. They were all dancing in a large crowd of hundreds of people all lost in music and mayhem. Then in the midst of all this madness, on a typical night – where once again we had witnessed a generation 'harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd,' lost and searching for fulfillment in all the wrong places, a broken generation trying to fix itself, to the point where all we could do was pray – something extraordinarily prophetic happened. Sex God grabbed Jesus and lifted him up on his shoulders. We stood in amazement at this wonderful picture that, in the midst of all this noise and mess, Jesus was lifted up – he was lifted up above all that was happening, everyone could see him: in that dark moment Jesus became visible.

In that moment I knew Jesus would have gatecrashed that world: not to be a party pooper, not to judge, but just to turn up in an unexpected place and become visible to all.

We had prayed – and then we saw Jesus lifted up!

And that's why we want to continue to pursue prayer and mission: because we want to see Jesus lifted up. We pray and encounter him, we find new levels of significance and security in that place of encounter – and out of that we can do our best to faithfully carry Christ into the world.

This world will be transformed by prayerful people who will carry Christ wherever he asks them to go.

'The vision is *still* JESUS – obsessively, dangerously, undeniably Jesus.'

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It felt like gatecrashing someone else's party. When we arrived in Ibiza, we felt awkward and out of place – scantily clad girls and pumping music, streets swaying with superheroes on a stag party and football fans from Bolton – we weren't exactly your obvious fit. We couldn't speak Spanish, we weren't into dance music – I don't even *like* dancing. We must have stuck out like sore thumbs.

But Ibiza is a beautiful island. White sandy beaches, crystal clear sea, blue skies, spectacular sunsets, orange groves, pine covered hills, dark red earth, ancient Spanish villas – it is truly lovely. We discovered hidden treasures, unseen by regular tourists. We loved having tapas in the old medieval town or watching the world go by as we sipped a coffee or a nice glass of wine. It was pure pleasure to walk the dog along the rocks next to the Mediterranean Sea just at the end of the road where we lived. We came to love the Ibiza lifestyle, the relaxed attitude to life and the emphasis that the Spanish placed on family. Most importantly we made friends from all sorts of backgrounds and nationalities on this very cosmopolitan island. We saw why it has long been the haven of the rich and the beautiful. And then also, more recently, of the young and the drunk. And strange as it might seem, it was this second aspect that we felt God was calling us to be involved in.

Every summer hundreds of thousands of holidaymakers arrive – the population of 120,000 is swamped by around 1.5 million visitors over the course of the summer – many of them British, most of them young, and most of them intent on having the best time on their holiday as they possibly can. San Antonio had, until recently, the most pubs, clubs and bars in a square mile in the whole of Europe. Alcohol is expensive in the clubs but in the West End there are offers: BOGOF, all you can drink for a tenner, that kind of thing. There are lots of lively bars and nightclubs – one club not far from San Antonio can hold as many as 10,000 people. It is said that forty thousand Ecstasy tablets are sold in Ibiza every single day of the summer. It's a lucrative trade controlled by rival gangs from UK cities like Liverpool and Newcastle, and from other parts of Europe and North Africa.

Sadly this combination often leads to excess – and the inevitable upsetting scenes of violence and injury and incapacity. In 1998 the UK Vice Consul to Ibiza resigned, very publicly, and was reported to say 'These degenerates are dragging us through the mud.' Ibiza was branded a modern day 'Sodom and Gomorrah' by the British press. 24-7 Prayer took that as an invitation, a challenge if you like, to go to the party island and pray. And there an invitation came: Sara Torres, who was born on the island and had grown up there, met Pete Greig and invited us.

We didn't need a reminder.

But still, we felt like gatecrashers, ‘friends of a friend’ at a wild party. If we hadn’t had an incredibly clear sense of God calling us, inviting us, we would never have considered going.

## RANDOM SIGNS, PRAYER AND OBEDIENCE

God speaks to each of us differently. If he is talking to you about mission, about going abroad or doing something in your local area – whether it is a stirring in your heart or a picture or a Scripture or the advice of friends – listen carefully, and talk to people you trust.

For us it was a combination of pointers. It started with a random comment about living abroad, which made an impression on both our minds and just didn’t go away. We then began to pray intentionally into our future, and there followed a series of signs and confirmations, some of which were truly bizarre! God managed to speak to us through a friend turning up on our doorstep and presenting us with two kites, the Vengaboys track *We’re going to Ibiza*, a homeless transsexual guy, a fifty-something lady in a bikini chasing a beachball, and a National Express advertising campaign!

These random signs happened over a few months, throughout which we were praying together daily, asking God to make clear his plans for us. The signs were accompanied by Bible verses and stories that jumped out at us, the listening advice and prayers of those who were already working and ministering in Ibiza, and the wise words and confirmation of trusted friends and those we were accountable to. And throughout it all, there was a growing sense of God showing us something new that he wanted us to pursue. It took a number of months and there were lots of questions and uncertainties. How would our children cope with such a big move? Were we being responsible parents? What would our friends and families think? Who would take on my role as church leader? How would we survive financially? What exactly would we do when we got there? Would anyone else come and help us? Faith is often scary: ‘faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see’ (Hebrews 11:1).

In the end we had to make a move – we had to ‘walk by faith and not by sight’ (2 Corinthians 5:7 ESV), and start to put things in

motion. As with many big life changes, there is a certain unreality in the time between decision made but action still pending. We were living with the little thought 'it's not too late to change our minds,' while ticking off the practical things that needed to be dealt with. Soon came a 'now or never' moment when we realised that if we didn't follow this conviction that God had spoken, we might never have the faith or courage to do anything like this, to really truly step out in faith and follow God's call on our lives.

Ibiza was a place we came to love and appreciate, but the simple truth was that our going was mostly about obedience to what we believed to be God's call. We took the step and found, over the years of prayer and mission which followed, that God was very clearly calling us to join the party in Ibiza, to be his guests, his servants, his representatives. This is the story of those years and some of the things we learned on the way.