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Journey
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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

We established Freely Given Tuesday, where every Tuesday anyone, no questions asked, can come into the restaurant and enjoy a meal. And it's all donation-based fair exchange, so they can pay more than the meal would normally cost, or less, or nothing at all and pay the kindness forward. This program helped us get a grant for a food truck.

See page 4 for this story; visit nadadventist.org/ajbroushets for more.

NICOLE AND VICTOR BROUSHET,
entrepreneurs/restaurateurs, and missionaries in Massachusetts



Cover photo by Pieter Damsteegt

Dear Reader: The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine, which follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

Adventist Journey (ISSN 1557-5519) is the journal of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The Northern Asia-Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the publisher. It is printed monthly by the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Copyright © 2020. Send address changes to your local conference membership clerk. Contact information should be available through your local church.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. Vol. 4, No. 12, December 2021. **Adventist Journey Publication Board** G. Alexander Bryant (chair), Kimberly Luste Maran (secretary), Kyoshin Ahn, Curtis Randolph Robinson, Wendy Eberhardt, Minner Labrador, Arne Nielsen, Maurice Valentine, Calvin Watkins Sr., Julio Muñoz, Karnik Doukmetzian, legal advisor **Scripture References** Unless otherwise noted, all Bible references are taken from the *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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Breaking Bread, Serving God,

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Nicole and Victor Broushet sit in the customer area of the Vegan Nest Café in Clinton, Massachusetts, the restaurant they opened in July 2021.

How two Adventist entrepreneurs are sharing food, hope, and the health message through their Massachusetts cafés.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

On a sidewalk in the heart of Clinton, Massachusetts, on a drizzly day with hints of fall in the New England air, a woman stooped down to converse with the youngest daughter of Nicole and Victor Broushet, the owners of the Vegan Nest Café restaurants. The woman's eyes crinkled in the corners as she bent her cloud-gray head to listen intently to the toddler's broken phrasings. An older sister, on the verge of kindergarten, sauntered over for a hug and conversation. The sounds of daily prep and smells of cooking food wafted from the open door of the café, setting the backdrop for the slow but steady traffic of cars and pedestrians—and the hushed conflag.

About a half hour later the woman appeared on the sidewalk again, this time with a bag containing small toys for the two girls and their older sister, who had been digging through large puzzle pieces in the children's nook of the café. Happy smiles later the three children carried around little pink ponies with tiny hairbrushes. On this day the woman did not stop for a bite to eat in the now-open café; she had just wanted to "visit" for a spell.

"She's a customer, but also a member of the community. She

All photos by Pieter Damsteegt.

likes to bring things, toys or treats, for the girls. A lot of people who come here do. It's like a family," Victor said with a smile when I asked about the exchange. "That's our community."

And make no mistake, while the Broushets run two restaurants in Massachusetts, with the second one opening in July 2021, they are involved in so much more that they hesitate to define their cafés—and their career paths—as traditional.

"We consider what we do medical missionary work," said Nicole. "And it's about creating community. We're not just a restaurant. I always joke about how I actually forget sometimes that we are a restaurant, because we have all of these other aspects."

And even though Nicole admits that their family works hard and long hours, it is an investment with incredible returns. "It's such a community-oriented space that it doesn't feel like work."

Nicole shares that the platform for their restaurants is that they seek to draw attention to the issue of food insecurity and health inequity—and looking at disparities in how people have access to food, how people have access to education around food, and the associated health outcomes. "Whether it's socioeconomic lines, racial disparities, whatever the case may be, there are many ways in which at different times different people are left out of the questions and issues around food. That's something very important to us to address through the café," she explained.

The Vegan Nest Café explores these issues in several different ways. The Broushets conduct culinary and nutrition education through cooking classes. They host Freely Given Tuesday, where customers "pay" what they are able, even if it is just paying kindness forward after receiving a free meal. They collect donated food and help stock refrigerator boxes of free food around the cities of Worcester and Clinton. They also do advocacy work: making sure that people in the community know what things are available to them, helping people obtain important information, and advocating for the people who may have suffered adverse health outcomes and need a voice.

"Our cooking classes are a big way we share that we love to cook, and we love to show other people how to cook," said Nicole, as we see a couple of customers receive steamy plates of tofu sandwiches and vegan mac and cheese with microgreens. "We love to show them how to make things not only delicious but nutrient-dense. God has given us natural remedies—a means to be able to help heal the body, or at least do as much as possible within our human power to be able to keep ourselves well. We show people how to combine different foods to get the most nutrients out of it. This helps in healing, avoiding disease, and maintaining a basic level of health."

It's More Than What You Eat

While the Broushets are adamant that a plant-based, nutrient-rich diet is vital, they say it goes deeper. They believe that God is so relational and loving that He not only cares about what happens to us in terms of salvation—He also cares about day-to-day decisions that can help or harm us.

"Our food choices and our health decisions impact not only our physical health but also our relational health, our emotional health, our environment. All of these different aspects are touched by the decisions that we make on a day-to-day basis," said Nicole, referencing 1 Corin-

"It's about creating community. We're not just a restaurant."

thians 10:31. "When I realized this, it opened up God in a really awesome way for me. God and I are on this journey together, and recognizing this has really allowed me to experience God in a very intimate relationship."

"That is the essence of the health message," she explained. "Surrendering every decision, every aspect of our life, to God and understanding that, as Creator, He knows what's best for us."

Victor agrees. "And as an Adventist, you've got to know what to do with the health message, and that the relationship with God can come from following it and surrendering to Him," he said. "Every Seventh-day Adventist should have some training in medical missionary work to handle those type of situations—not just for strangers, but for your extended family, your immediate family, and yourself."

From Texas to Massachusetts, by Way of New York

Nicole grew up in a Christian home; and her passion for clean eating started early. "I grew up in Texas, which is big on farming and cattle and all of that, and my kindergarten field trip was to a slaughterhouse," she shared. "Going through that experience, I was absolutely horrified. I made the decision that day that I would abstain from eating animals." While Nicole didn't know the proper terms until much later, she did, in fact, become vegan. As she continued to mature she also started focusing on the environmental impact and the health impact, but didn't connect her beliefs with her faith until she met Victor in her early 20s.

Victor, an electrician from New York City, was raised Seventh-day Adventist

and explained that eating healthfully was a principle espoused by the Adventist Church. “I told Nicole that this is something that my church really believes in, in terms of eating healthfully and being mindful of what we eat—and that there’s actually a strong spiritual component,” said Victor.

When Victor shared his thoughts on the health message, Nicole was surprised to learn that there were people who lived for Jesus and didn’t eat meat. So she started studying.

“At first, we were living for ourselves—not really interested in church. Her dad got us back into going to church. Then my dad encouraged us to go with him,” Victor said. “But it wasn’t clicking for me yet. I finally got to a point where I said, *God, I can’t do this the same way I did it before. You’re going to have to show me something different or I can’t be a part of this.* And He did. From that moment I’ve had a supernatural experience. My entire family has had a supernatural experience with God from that day forth.”

“I came into the health message first and then into the Sabbath truth. Then pretty much right after we got married I made the decision to be baptized,” Nicole added.

Nicole, an organizational psychologist working in the nonprofit sector for large NGOs and conducting leadership development, conflict resolution, and group dynamics, enjoyed eating healthful and delicious food. It wasn’t until Victor’s dad became terminally ill that she and Victor had the opportunity to explore more fully the connections between health and diet, and then take a medical missionary training course. The couple both finished the training, then started a small “sanitarium” out of their little New York City apartment.

Nicole shared that in those early days “we would have people stay



Nicole and Victor Broushet pose at the front counter of their first Vegan Nest Café location in Worcester, Massachusetts.

with us; and we’d help them with different things that they were struggling with. Whether it was high blood pressure, mental health disorders, struggles with HIV and AIDS, or people just having issues with maintaining a healthy weight because of medications, we’d work with them, assisting them in a practical way to apply simple methods to help bring about healing and spiritual revival. From there we started going to schools, universities, and businesses throughout New York City, where we’d teach about nutrition, health equity, food accessibility. We’d spend our time predominantly in the food-insecure areas—food deserts in Brooklyn, the Bronx, different parts of the city—exposing people to the things that would be able to help prevent or overcome disease.”

As the Broushets continued teaching, people would ask them to cater. Nicole dedicated herself full-time to the ministry of education and cooking. Eventually their meal preparation grew to catering for 1,000 people—out of that little New York City apartment—and realizing two things: they enjoyed it, and they could actually do it. “That’s when we really started praying in earnest,” said Nicole. “And we started digging into the Old Testament, looking at the kings of Israel, the rise and fall of the various kings. We started looking at leadership and purpose and how these various men were called to certain things and whether or not they fulfilled their calling—and how it impacted the nation around them. We kept praying.”

One day during this time the Broushets were driving down a beautiful autumn road in the middle of the city when Victor turned to Nicole and said, “The Vegan Nest.”

Nicole replied, “Yeah. Sure. But what is it?”

“I don’t know,” he answered. “But it’s in my head. The Vegan Nest.”

When they got home, the couple created a Facebook page called “The Vegan Nest.” They started posting all kinds of health information. People were reading and interacting with the material. And the Broushets started to cater more, and do pop-up events, which allowed them to reach more people. “We did vegan festivals, pop-ups; we drove down to Tennessee to Coffee Fest with our herbal coffee. We eventually did an event in New England, and one thing led to another. We were not planning on opening a restaurant, but here we are. Four years later we are happy to say that we have not only one but two locations, and we’re growing.”

The Broushets have established themselves as community members who know their neighbors by their first names, and often, even the simplest of exchanges leads to prayer.

“We had an unexpected opportunity in Worcester—a miracle, really,” said Victor about their first café, which opened on November 5, 2017, near a pharmacy school and next to an Irish pub. “And I’m like, ‘I’m all in.’ I immediately quit my union job. I said, *Lord, I know You have this. You’re my pension.* Whatever money I had accumulated over 28 years was exactly enough to take over the place.”

A Pandemic, Prayer, and a Food Truck

The Broushets have established themselves as community members who know their neighbors by their first names. Willing to listen to those in need gives them the opportunity to make friends and share their expertise—and their faith—to those who in turn are willing. Often even the simplest of exchanges leads to prayer.

And those prayers with and for others often lead to miraculous answers for all involved.

“We’ve had employees who’ve come to know Jesus through working here with us,” said Nicole, sharing that several, along with family members, have either joined the church or are in Bible studies.

“We’ve had customers come in and see something that needs fixing and help us with it,” she continued. “And we’ve seen how God works during the pandemic.”

The couple signed the contract on the Clinton location on March 5, 2020. On March 10 everything started shutting down because of the pandemic. “It was like a bad movie,” Nicole said. “We were getting pings and messages and notifi-

cations with friends in the business saying they were shuttering their doors, laying off their staffs, and closing down. It was scary.”

Nicole recalls standing with her phone in hand when Victor came over and gently put the phone down. “We’re going to pray,” he said. And they did, rededicating the café to the Lord.

The Broushets worked 80– to 90-hour weeks. They struggled to keep their staff, putting a halt to the second location buildout. They were concerned about their customers and friends. Then the Lord gave them the nesting box concept. With the nesting box campaign, they’d check in with certain customers they knew that had health situations to make sure they had what they needed, and the Broushets and their staff delivered boxes of food.

“It was hard. And it’s still hard,” said Nicole. “But I do know and trust in God’s goodness.”

And God’s not done yet. “We just received a grant from the Boston Celtics, Vistaprint, and the NAACP to fund a food truck, which we plan to use to provide food equity,” Victor said. “Although it’s a small portion of what we need to build out the entire food truck, it’s a start. And that’s how God works, you know? He gives us the start, and we must be patient, and then He’ll provide the rest. I have no doubt that God’s going to provide everything we need for the community food truck.”

“Our goal is to create this arm of the restaurant that will be able to go into low-income neighborhoods, to rural communities, and provide

food, completely donation-based, fair exchange, throughout the week,” added Nicole. “We’ll be able to make sure that people have access to healthy food. As part of the program, we’ll also be able to share information and guidance, and provide counsel. We plan to have trained medical missionaries come on board and be there to be able to offer these services. It’s going to be an incredible opportunity to connect with communities here in New England.”

Nicole continued, “I like to say it’s truly a highways-and-byways type of ministry, going out and doing what we can to reach everyone. Building community. It’s that breaking bread together.”

We pause as Nicole greets a customer she hasn’t seen in months. She approaches, and the uniformed worker beams. Nicole listens as the man updates her. She encourages him to try a special dish. He does, and, with a lift in his step, carries his carryout container across the warm brick-and-wood-accented dining area to his waiting delivery truck.

“We are still learning every single day,” she added. “But the incredible thing is that God is on this journey with us, and He is responsible for our success. We just have to step forward in faith. It’s kind of a back-against-the-wall situation. You’re either going to do it or you’re not. And when you make that decision to go forward, there is no going back.”

“We’ve put our faith in Christ and will just keep going.”

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey.



All photos are screenshots from convention livestream.

← NAD Children's Ministries leaders Sherri Uhrig, director, and Gerry Lopez, associate director, during the opening presentation of the 2021 Do It Together Sabbath School Leadership Convention on September 9.

LAST MONTH'S UPDATE

We regret to announce that after our article on Charles E. Bradford was printed in last month's *Adventist Journey*, daughter Sharon Louise Bradford Lewis passed to her rest. Please pray for the Bradford-Lewis family.

DO IT TOGETHER NAD VIRTUAL SABBATH SCHOOL CONVENTION OFFERS GUIDANCE, RESOURCES, INSPIRATION

Sabbath School is an incredibly important part of our church," said Gerry Lopez, associate Children's Ministries director for the North American Division (NAD), during the opening general session of the 2021 Do It Together Sabbath School Convention. This two-day event took place online September 9-11, 2021.

To get the event started, Sherri Uhrig, NAD Children's Ministries director, asked participants to call out in the chat feature what their particular gifts are.

"It's OK to share that with others," she added. "God gave you those gifts to use for Him and for others, so identify those that are unique to you and own them!"

Responses in the chat included caring, music, making others feel welcome, teaching, administration, listening, speaking, sharing God's love with children, encouragement, and many others.

Following the opening session, participants split into their desired track: children's ministries, youth ministries, or adult ministries, attending several sessions each day. Specialized training for online Sabbath School was also offered. Each workshop was presented in English and interpreted into Spanish and French. Most sessions saw attendance between 70 and 120.

"The whole 'Do It Together' theme is about saying that the better way to do Sabbath School, and the strength and the power that come when we all decide

that we're going to do it, is together," said Vandean Griffin, NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries associate director. "We feel like that's where the power comes—when we just all come together, intergenerationally, and do this thing."

Active Learning

Children's Ministries sessions started with "Ministering to Children With Special Needs," presented by Linda Schaffner, a Children's Ministries team member who also has a teen in this category.

"Serving children with special needs takes an open mind and an open heart to see the value and beauty a child with special needs brings to the body of Christ," said Schaffner. "It takes willingness to see things differently. Jesus doesn't call just those who can walk, talk, see, and hear; He calls *all* of them."

Schaffner invited all attendees to find a pencil and a piece of paper, then asked them to hold the pencil in their nondominant hand and

write down the sentences she was about to say. "Listen carefully," she warned, "because I won't repeat any of them."

The sentences started simple, working up to the final one: "In August, Sam and his family went to New Zealand looking for the lost articles of Mesopotamia that were said to have disappeared in the early 1600s."

No participant was able to complete even one sentence, and many expressed frustration and a sense of defeat very early in the activity. Schaffner said children sometimes feel that way too.

"We have a calling to see things through Jesus' eyes," she added. "It's critical that we create a place where no matter their ability, children have the opportunity to serve and worship Jesus."

Other Children's Ministries events included "Understanding Challenging Kids," "Teaching Children to Pray," "Active Learning," "Teaching Children to Think," "Teaching From Nature," "Interactive Storytelling," and more.

IGNITE

In the fifth Youth Ministry workshop for "Involve" (the second I in "IGNITE") Rogelio Paquini presented "How to Start Good Discussions." Ideas ranged from voting on a particular issue/idea, to giving the youth a dilemma situation and asking them what they would do and why, to interviewing someone in class.

"How you close a discussion is just as important as how you start

it," Paquini pointed out. "You want to leave them with something to do or something to think about until the next time you're together."

Suggestions included challenging the students to take what was discussed to the next level in their own lives, asking the group a question to ponder during the week, or giving them something to take home as a symbol of what was discussed.

One of the participants asked what they should do if the kids are talking with each other, but not about the Sabbath School lesson. Paquini was quick to point out that any and all conversation is important, especially for youth.

As presenter Steve Case shared in a different youth session: "Friends are currency to young people. The more friends you have, the richer you are."

Paquini urged teachers and leaders to let those "small talk" conversa-

tions happen, and to use the topics they naturally gravitate toward to start the bigger conversations.

"Start with the things they're comfortable with—school, sports, friends, food, family—and then move into the deeper, more spiritual issues," he said. "Give them time to get comfortable interacting, and then guide them into a more meaningful experience."

Other youth session topics included "Jesus in Your Youth Sabbath School," "Increase Participation," "Teaching Techniques of Cornerstone," and "Communion: Communicating Community," among others.

↓ A musical group performs during the 2021 NAD Do It Together Sabbath School Leadership Convention opening general session.



Now We're Talking

In the adult Sabbath School session "My Ideal Sabbath School," Colette Newer shared ways to add a spark to traditional adult Sabbath School. Among other ideas, she urged leaders to honor diverse perspectives in their classes.

"Be aware not only of who is talking, but who *isn't*," she encouraged. "Pay attention to who isn't represented in our understanding and discussions."

Sometimes, Newer pointed out, we assume people don't speak up because they aren't interested in talking. But, she says, that's rarely true.

"God is working through them, and they do have things to say," she stated. "It's healthy for them to be able to share, and for us to hear them."

Newer gave examples of the kinds of perspectives to consider: economic status, gender, country of origin, field of education, ethnicity, culture, and age.

She also suggested that Sabbath School leaders make it a point to utilize outreach and activities in their classes, using the weekly gathering as a springboard for action throughout the week. In a different adult Sabbath School session J. Alfred Johnson II pointed out that "Sabbath School is not the church at study; it's the church in action."

↓ The NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries team, (left to right) associate director Vandeon Griffin, director Tracy Wood, and associate director Armando Miranda Jr., start the 2021 Do It Together Sabbath School Leadership Convention off on September 9.



↑ Pastor Tara VinCross speaks at the virtual NAD Sabbath School convention on September 10, 2021.

Newer concurred: "This is not to replace the lesson or Bible study, but to amplify and intensify those things through work in our families and neighborhoods. Sabbath School should breathe life into my faith, making it an experience and not just a theory."

Other adult sessions included "Changing the Growth Trajectory of Your Sabbath School," "Creating Great Class Discussions," "How to Organize and Teach a Sabbath School Class," and more.

A Lifelong Journey

On Friday evening during the event, nearly 130 participants came together virtually for worship with Pastor Tara VinCross from the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in California. VinCross pointed out that as of October 2020 the statistics still show that 50 percent of those who join the church eventually leave it, and while this may be discouraging, it also points to exactly what the focus of the church must be: discipleship.

"Discipleship is a lifelong journey, and is not defined by the moment we're in right now," she said. "Every disciple has periods of high faith and times of devastating doubt. This doesn't disqualify them as disciples; it simply means there are seasons to our spiritual journey."

VinCross said we need to make sure our kids also know and understand God—to have the depth of a relationship that leads them to make a difference in the world. But, she added, we cannot give them something we ourselves are not experiencing.

"You are chosen," she said with feeling. "We sometimes get caught up thinking of other things, and need to leave those things behind in order to step forward into our identity in Christ."

VinCross then asked all participants to take a Sharpie and write on the bottom of their shoe something that they would commit to leave behind in order to focus more fully on God and His calling in their lives. In the chat many shared what they had written: control, mistakes, doubt, people-pleasing, the past, pain, judgmental attitude, worry, selfishness, insecurity, trauma, anger, self-assurance.

"We are invited to bring our brokenness into the light of Jesus," VinCross said in closing. "Brokenness in the hands of God brings healing. When we place our meager offerings in the hands of Jesus, all are satisfied and there are usually leftovers. We may not feel like we have enough right now, but when we place what we have in God's hands, it is enough."

Becky St. Clair writes from Angwin, California.

BY HEATHER CREWS

Great Opportunity for Pastors and Churches

Walking into the building, I could feel the buzz. The hum of energy. This building was filled with thousands of people, all of them clergy and their families.

Everywhere I looked I saw people I knew, respected, wanted to learn from. Pastors who articulated the Word of God with passion, chaplains with the gifts to come alongside people in crisis, evangelists who preached boldly and courageously. This was the CALLED Convention in 2015—an unparalleled experience where I soaked up knowledge and deepened my commitment to serving God.

The CALLED Convention is coming back on June 19-22, 2022, to Lexington, Kentucky! This event, which usually happens only once every five years, will allow your pastor to join with fellow church-based clergy and chaplains from around the North American Division for a special ministry experience. The CALLED Convention is planned carefully and prayerfully by the NAD Ministerial Association to support the work and calling of pastors and their families. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken, and is taking, an immense toll on your pastor as he or she continues to lead your church to share Jesus. This convention is an opportunity to come aside and restore the fire that first call to ministry sparked.

The convention will emphasize serving, and with the theme "Together in Mission—I Will Go," it will encourage pastors as they fulfill their commitment and calling to ministry. An amazing opportunity will also be available: At the convention more than \$120,000 will be given away to pastors/churches to use in evangelism. If your church wants to be a part of this, start brainstorming ways to best engage in transformational evangelism in your community. Your pastor will be given the opportunity to pitch to a group of judges. With these resources, imagine what you could do as a church to share Jesus. The only way to be able to pitch for these funds is to send your pastor to the CALLED Convention.

The seminars and presentations are geared to renew the spirit. I invite you to help make it possible for the pastor in your life to take advantage of this opportunity. Conferences and unions are

working together to support the funds needed to get your pastor there; you can support too.

The list of topics to be explored at the CALLED Convention focus on the core qualities of an effective pastor. Seminars cover character qualities, technical gifts such as speaking, the opportunity to learn about study tools to deepen sermon preparation, communication networks to keep the church connected as a community, how to engage as an Adventist Christian with the current issues our world is facing—and the list goes on.

Encourage your pastor to go; understand that it may be time away from your church, but the church will reap the benefits. The next time you see your pastor, ask, "Pastor, will you be attending the CALLED Convention?"

The Ministerial Association needs your support as we continue to prayerfully plan to make this possible for your pastor. Thank you for encouraging your pastors and their families to register today as well sharing support as they make arrangements to attend this year's CALLED Convention.

We thank you for your support and solicit your prayers and participation as we strive to make this event a smooth and seamless blessing to attendees.

In an endeavor to both encourage and keep your pastor safe, all local and state COVID regulations will be followed.

Just as I went home from my previous CALLED experience with a renewed commitment to my call to the gospel ministry, and with a deeper sense of connection with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, your pastor can also have this experience with your help.

Heather Crews is associate director for women clergy for the North American Division Ministerial Association.

CALLED will encourage pastors as they fulfill their commitment and calling to ministry.



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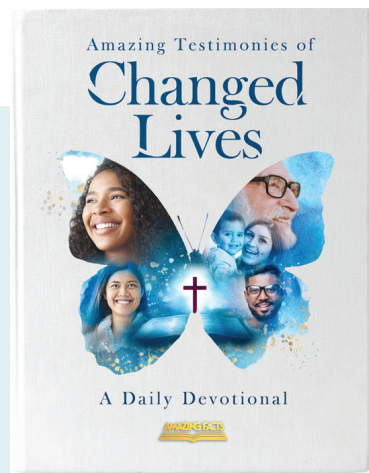
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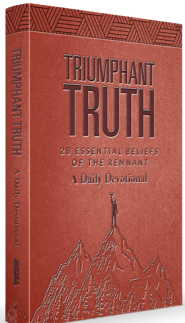
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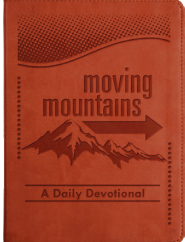
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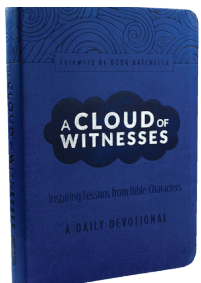
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