

SOUTHWESTERN UNION

Record

NOVEMBER 2015



*Sharing
Your Faith*

THE POWER OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY



8



In this Issue...

DEPARTMENTS

To Your Health 4
 MyFaith 5
 Pass It On 6
 Visión Hispana 7

FEATURES

Holding on to Your First Love 8
 The Prodigal Daughter 12
 Where Was My Miracle 14

NEWS

Arkansas-Louisiana 16
 Oklahoma 19
 Southwest Region 22
 Texas 25
 Texico 28
 Southwestern Adventist University . . . 31
 Southwestern Union 32
 North American Division 33

ETCETERA

Classified Ads 34
 Announcements 37
 Obituaries 38
 On the Record 39

HOLDING ON TO YOUR FIRST LOVE



12

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

Where Was My Miracle?



14

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On the Cover

Lydia Marie Phillips was baptized by Sergio Ochoata at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas in July. A fourth-generation Adventist, she left the faith at age 20. Now she shares her testimony as she says God has called her to do. Read about her journey back to Jesus on page 12. [Photos by Rohann Wellington]



Point of View»

BY EDDIE CANALES » SOUTHWESTERN UNION VICE PRESIDENT



God Specializes in Human Impossibilities

In Ecclesiastics 11:6, we read the following, “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good.” What is King Solomon saying through divine inspiration? He’s saying that we should take every opportunity to witness to others, even to those who don’t look very promising.

It is so easy to look at people and label them as lost, without hope, and assume that we shouldn’t waste our time with them.

Thankfully, there was a dedicated Adventist family in California who didn’t think that way. This was a large family; a father, a mother, and 10 children. The Gonzalez family was committed to sharing their faith with others. I was 15 years old when I met them. Soon thereafter, some of the teenagers in this family invited me to attend their small group meeting in their home. At that time, others would have thought that it was a waste of time to invite someone like me to participate with them in the small group meeting.

While I grew up in a stable family, the youngest of six, and had loving parents, I lacked spiritual instruction because my family was not religious. Since my childhood, I was attracted to music. At the age of 12, I was playing different instruments with a music group in my neighborhood, and I was hanging around with older boys. Soon, I found myself experimenting with drugs.

Right after I turned 15, a tragedy shook my world. My father died. I felt a great emptiness in my life; I was having a hard time making sense of it all. It was like I didn’t have a compass to guide me. At this very time, God used this dear family to minister to me. They not only shared Jesus with me, which in itself was a great blessing to me since I was experiencing the loss of my father, but they showed a sincere interest in me and loved me into their family. Soon, I learned, in the small group Bible study, about the hope

the Bible gives us of a resurrection day, and about the hope of eternal life we can have in God. Now, I was looking forward to the day when I was going to be able to reunite with my dear father and loved ones!

I am so grateful to this family who was willing to invest time in me, even though I didn’t look too promising. This dear family paid a very high price for having invited me to their small group. Because a few years later I ended up marrying their youngest daughter, Angie, and we have been married for 40 years!

I hope that you decide to invest time in others. Maybe you



Angie and Eddie Canales’ dating days.



Eddie’s love of music brought him into the musical group which led him to meet the Gonzalez family and his future wife, Angie.

have relatives, or people in your neighborhood, or co-workers, whom no one sees hope in. But, remember, Jesus said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

Someone told me, “God specializes in human impossibilities.”

Share your faith and experience the joy of seeing others transformed by the Spirit of God. Yes, even those who don’t look very promising!



To Your Health

BY EMBEDZAYI MADHIRI

A Testimony of Health

Our family had just moved to the United States of America shortly after my husband and I had been baptized into the Adventist Church in Harare, Zimbabwe. We transferred to the Morgantown church, a very small church in a college town that is home to West Virginia University. It is at this little church that I became acquainted with the health message. Up until this point, I had no idea that what you ate could affect your health.

One evening, I was invited by one of the church members to a series of health lectures that a physician was presenting at the church. Without much thought to it, I agreed to attend. Upon entering the fellowship hall where the meetings were being held, I was met by a gentleman who explained to me that they were measuring body weight and body composition, and also that they would take a blood sample to analyze. This would be done at the beginning and at the end of the program, which was a month long, and they would use this comparison to check for the improvement in the health status of individuals, hoping that we would be applying the information that we learned. I was excited to see how things would go, but I was not ready for what I was about to learn. I was asked to step onto the electrical bio-impedance scale (a scale that measures body weight and body composition). I was not shocked that I was overweight, well, obese would be the more accurate description of my condition. What shook me was the fact that I had 51% body fat! This scared me! I had more fat than muscles and bone combined! At that point I weighed about 215 pounds and doing a little math revealed that I was carrying around over 110 pounds as fat! I honestly do not remember anything else about that night as I found myself horrified at the numbers that I had just processed. I knew I had to do something about my condition.

The nights that followed I would get to learn a lot about the relationship between lifestyle and health. I learned that it was not just about what you eat (nutrition) that affects your health, but I was also introduced to the other seven “doctors” of health (as they were referred to): exercise, water, sunlight, temperance, fresh air, rest, and having trust in God. I had a lot to learn and implement, but it was important for me to not be overwhelmed by all the new things I was learning and to be discouraged by the realization of the amount of work that I would need to do to lose the extra 80 pounds I was carrying. I had to choose one thing to focus on and then introduce the others as time progressed.

My first choice was my diet. I literally became vegetarian overnight. Looking back, I do not think my diet was balanced.



However, I am thankful that I started somewhere, as it began a journey that would change not only my life but the lives of my family members, as well. I am thankful for a church family that provided me with a lot of resources (recipes being the biggest one!) that helped me succeed. I also started walking, one mile per day at the beginning. I had a walking partner who helped to keep me motivated. With very limited financial resources, I had no funds to join a gym, so I made use of the hills of West Virginia! I walked up and down the streets. To my amazement, I lost most of my weight speed walking, more than any other form of exercise I have done. As I have learned about the importance of building strong muscles, I have now incorporated strength training into my exercise routine.

Other changes that I did were to make breakfast the biggest meal of the day and to make supper very small (for example fruit salad and popcorn). I also tried my best to make use of whole foods that usually come packed with fiber. This helped me get full without consuming a lot of food. I also eliminated drinking my calories! I refrained from drinking soft drinks as well as fruit juices (it's better to eat the fruit!) Drinking plenty of water between meals helped me to keep feeling full, and that way I avoided snacking between meals. I am thankful to the Lord for giving me the strength and courage to persevere. I lost over 50 pounds in six months!

The Lord still had a lesson for me, in that this lifestyle that I had adopted would be for the rest of my life! After maintaining the weight loss for a few years, I went back to some of my old habits. I stopped exercising and my weight climbed back to get closer to what it had been before. But I remembered the path I had taken before and I am glad to say I have since lost all the weight I had regained and by God's grace I soldier on!

My Walk With God

I ATTRIBUTE MY WALK WITH GOD to the transformation of my older brother. If it weren't for what God did for him, I wouldn't have witnessed God's power as I know it today.

During high school, life at home wasn't always the best. My parents were constantly fighting, and my older brother would bring home problems with his rebellious nature. He was going through a phase where his focus was completely on himself and how he could get away from home. Although he was a bit reckless, I always looked up to him. If he was nice, I was nice. If he talked about how he couldn't wait to get as far away from home as possible, I did the same.

My mom tried her best to raise us with good Christian values, but I never really knew what I believed in. I even remember telling my mom I was an atheist when I was 14. It broke her heart, but she continued praying for us to know Christ. She would drag us to church every Sunday and made us sit through Bible studies at home. My brother hated those. One time he was so frustrated with my mom and her beliefs that he threw her Bible across the room and stormed out of the house with rage and fire in his eyes. He was always angry and wanted nothing to do with God. He was going to school at Angelo State University and was failing every class. He got involved with drugs, alcohol, and excessive partying. After flunking out of his first semester, my parents brought him back home to the local community college, so that he could get his act together.

At that time, we were going to a non-denominational church, where my sister and I got involved with the youth group, mostly because of my mom's wishes. I was still skeptical of God's existence but went to make her happy.

There was a retreat coming up and my mom didn't want my sister and me going alone, so she made my brother join us. Dreadfully, he came but was acting completely indifferent the entire time. During worship, everyone stood up to sing, and my brother stayed seated with his arms crossed tightly against his chest. As the songs continued to play, though, I noticed him standing up and

making his way toward the altar. I immediately looked toward him, wondering what he was about to do, and when I realized what was happening, my heart sank. He began to cry and just collapsed on the steps of the stage. I was completely in shock and stood there frozen.

My brother was the last one I ever thought would give his life to Christ, and when I saw him there on his knees trembling and crying like a baby, it was at that moment that I knew God was real, because only God could have transformed his hardened heart.

Since that moment, our lives have changed completely. We were now actually willing to study the Bible with my mom, and a few months later, an Adventist couple from Argentina came to our door. They were Colporters, selling health books. They offered Bible studies, and within a few months we were baptized into the Adventist church.

Now, all having graduated from Adventist universities this past summer, my siblings and I are

all starting very new chapters in our lives. My brother still remains a great role model for me, but instead of ignorantly pointing me towards destruction, he always points me towards Christ.



Indiana Melendez (right) knew God was real when her brother Javier (left) unexpectedly gave his life to Christ.



Pass it On...

A Monthly Focus on Evangelism in the Southwest

BY ROCÍO ARMSTRONG » RECORD CIRCULATION MANAGER

Focus on Jesus—Not Fear!

Was I ready to preach an evangelistic series? Of course I was! I worked for the church. I pray and talk with God daily. I have preached before, and most of my friends are Christians.

There I was, in Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa, with a group of “international evangelists” ready to preach the series, but after the first presentation I was terrified. Granted, most of us had never preached an evangelistic series, nevertheless, we had all heard and studied this topic, so what was the problem? Why did I feel so afraid?

It is one thing to work for the church, mingle with Christian friends, and preach once in a while on a topic you are comfortable with. It’s an entirely different experience sharing the entire Adventist message, especially when there are doctrines we don’t completely understand, and dare I say, even avoid. Having to deliver these messages with power in Harare, with the expectation of many baptisms was an experience like no other.

After the first meeting the weight of my own inadequacy felt like an elephant on my chest, and I couldn’t wait to get back to my room to study. As I was being driven back to the hotel I began to question God. In my frustration I asked, “Why am I here? Why did you bring me? There are others more capable than I am.” I felt so unqualified.

When I realized my responsibility to share these messages with people starving for salvation, and longing for deliverance from the anguish of their daily struggles to survive, I was gripped by the fear that I wouldn’t have enough time to prepare for the next meeting. I thought to myself, “How am I going to convey the love of Jesus to them in a way that is meaningful when I know little of their culture and way of life?” Harare has an unemployment rate of 80 percent, and the things most of us take for granted, like food, water and basic utilities, are in short supply there.

As I prayed, I suddenly realized that I was not there simply to teach them a series of doctrines. The messages were so important,

because they shared who Jesus is, His plan for them, and how He will one day bring an end to all their pain and sorrow. I had to understand Jesus’ plan to save me. I could then share with them passionately and with conviction what Jesus had done for me. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit leading me that night, and my whole focus changed. Every message had a personal connection to Jesus. My previous fears began to fade, but they only gave way to a new fear; Was my relationship with Jesus strong enough to touch anyone else?

I was in constant prayer, and I felt physically sick from the burden of responsibility I had been given. I wanted to leave, and be back home where I felt safe and comfortable. I did not want to be accountable to God for failing. This was my struggle each day for the first seven days.

Once I realized my situation was not going to change, I begged Jesus to change me. I pleaded for Him to cleanse me, to heal my mind, my thoughts, my wishes, and my desires. For seven painful days I struggled while He quietly worked to transform me, from the inside out, into a free agent for His service. He touched my heart as I studied the messages with heartfelt concern for those who would listen to them. When the electricity went out He gave power to my voice so every ear could hear His message. Every night when I made the call for baptism it was

God leading them by the hand. My heart ached for my brothers and sisters in Harare, as they had become my passion. I devoted my time to praying with them, visiting with them, and holding special prayer meetings. It was such a joy watching them as they began to participate more and more in the evening programs.

Before I knew it our time in Harare had come to an end, but I was not ready to leave. There was much more to do! I came home with a fire in my heart and a renewed desire to serve Jesus. Having been changed forever by my experience with God in Harare, more than ever I am striving to serve others with the talents He entrusted to me, and passionately sharing what He is doing in my life.



This youth (right), pictured with me here, was a joy to be with and she was inspired to participate in the last Sabbath program.



Enfócate en Jesús—¡No en el Temor!

¿Estaba dispuesta a predicar una serie de evangelización? ¡Por supuesto que estaba! He trabajado para la iglesia. Oro y hablo con Dios todos los días. He predicado antes, y la mayoría de mis amistades son cristianos.

Allí estaba yo, en Harare, Zimbabue, África, con un grupo de “evangelistas internacionales” listos para predicar la serie, pero, después de la primera presentación quede aterrorizada. Por supuesto, la mayoría de nosotros nunca habíamos predicado una serie de evangelización, no obstante, todos habíamos oído hablar de este tema, así que ¿cuál era el problema? ¿Por qué estaba temerosa?

Una cosa es trabajar para la iglesia, charlar con mis amigos cristianos, y predicar de vez en cuando sobre un tema interesante. Es una experiencia muy diferente compartir el mensaje adventista, sobre todo cuando hay doctrinas que no entendemos por comple-

to, y me atrevería a decir, e incluso evitar. Tener que presentar estos mensajes con poder en Harare, con la expectativa de muchos bautismos, fue una experiencia como ninguna otra.

Después de la primera reunión, con el peso de mi propia insuficiencia sentía como que un elefante estaba en mi pecho, y estaba desesperada para volver a mi habitación a estudiar. Cuando estaba siendo conducida de regreso al hotel empecé a cuestionar a Dios. En mi frustración le pregunté: “¿Por qué estoy aquí? ¿Por qué me has traído? Hay otros más capaces que yo.” Me sentí tan incapacitada.

Cuando me di cuenta de mi responsabilidad de compartir estos mensajes a las personas que están agonizantes buscando salvación, que anhelan la emancipación de la angustiada lucha diaria por la sobrevivencia, me sentía sofocada por el temor de no tener tiempo suficiente de preparación para la próxima reunión. Me dije a mí misma: “¿Cómo voy a transmitir el amor de Jesús por ellos de una manera significativa cuando sé poco de su cultura y forma de vida?” Harare tiene una tasa de desempleo del 80 por ciento, y las cosas que la mayoría de nosotros damos por sentadas como la comida, el agua y los servicios básicos son escasos allí.

Mientras oraba, de repente me di cuenta de que yo no estaba allí simplemente para enseñarles una serie de doctrinas. Los mensajes eran tan importantes por que describen quién es Jesús, Su plan

para ellos, y cómo Él algún día acabara con todo su dolor y tristeza. Tuve que entender el plan de Jesús para salvarme. Entonces yo podría compartir con ellos con pasión y convicción lo que Jesús había hecho por mí. Sentí la presencia del Espíritu Santo que me guiaba esa noche, y todo mi enfoque cambió. Cada mensaje tenía una conexión personal con Jesús. Mis temores anteriores comenzaron a disiparse, pero, sólo dieron paso a un nuevo temor; ¿era mi relación con Jesús lo suficientemente fuerte como para tocar a alguien más?

Yo estaba en constante oración, y me sentía físicamente enferma por el peso de tal responsabilidad que me habían dado. Yo me quería ir, y estar de vuelta en mi casa donde me sentí segura y cómoda. Yo no quería ser responsable ante Dios si fallaba. Esta fue mi lucha diaria durante los primeros siete días.

Una vez que me di cuenta de que mi situación no iba a cambiar, le rogué a Jesús que me cambiara. Le supliqué me limpiara, que sanara mi mente, mis pensamientos, mis ideales, y mis deseos. Durante siete días dolorosos luché mientras Él trabajó silenciosamente en transformarme, de adentro hacia afuera, en un agente libre para Su servicio. Tocó mi corazón mientras estudiaba los mensajes con sincera preocupación por aquellos oyentes. Cuando la electricidad se fue, le dio poder a mi voz para que todo oído pudiera escuchar Su mensaje. Cada noche durante la llamada al bautismo fue Dios quien les llevó de la mano. Me dolía el corazón por mis hermanos y

hermanas en Harare, Él los convirtió en mi pasión. Dedicé mi tiempo a orar con ellos, visitando con ellos, y teniendo reuniones especiales de oración. Era grande la alegría al verlos involucrarse más y más cada noche participando en los programas.

Antes de darme cuenta; nuestro tiempo en Harare había llegado a su fin, pero yo no estaba lista para partir. ¡Había mucho más que hacer! Regresé a casa con un fuego en mi corazón y un deseo renovado de servir a Jesús. Después de haber sido cambiada para siempre durante mi experiencia con Dios en Harare, hoy más que nunca, me esfuerzo para servir a los demás con los talentos que Él me ha confiado, y apasionadamente deseo compartir lo que está haciendo en mi vida.



Los niños eran los primeros en llegar cada noche, desde una hora a hora y media. Los recibía con cantos e historias para ellos.

Rocio Armstrong, Record manager de circulación

HOLDING ON TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

Eduardo Canales, Southwestern Union vice president

Have you ever felt like you don't have the same enthusiasm for spiritual things that you had when you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior? You go to church, you study the Bible, or you pray, but you don't feel like doing it? If that's your situation, you're not alone. The same thing happens to many of us at one time or another. In our Christian journey, we experience a sense of spiritual stagnation.

Let me share with you a little bit of my journey. I didn't grow up in a Seventh-day Adventist home. I was 15 years old when my father died, and that left me with a tremendous emptiness in my life and a great sense of loss. Right at that point in my young life, I was trying to make some sense of it. It was then that God used a dear Adventist Christian family to bring me hope and to teach me about God's love and about the salvation we can have in Jesus. At that time, I was living in a town close to San Jose, California, and I met some members of this Adventist family who held a small group ministry in their home, which they invited me to join. From the first time I attended, I began to experience God's presence in my soul and hope and peace came to my life. The more I continued attending these meetings, the more I experienced God's blessings. What a

joy it was for me to participate in the small group program. When we prayed, I would feel God's presence in our midst. The songs we sang brought joy to my heart. In the meeting, they shared testimonies and praises about the prayers that were answered in their behalf and the blessings they had received. This experience increased my faith in God. I learned to trust in a God who is real and who is interested in our needs and always ready to answer our prayers.

Soon I was attending church. I remember the great joy I felt that Sabbath morning when I accepted Jesus as my Savior through baptism. What a delight it was to attend prayer meeting on Wednesday nights, Sabbath School, the worship service on Sabbath morning, and the youth program on Sabbath afternoon. And believe it or not, I used to find delight in going out witnessing, distributing literature, giving Bible studies and inviting people to attend church with us. Later, I found joy in serving the Lord as a literature evangelist. I used to go door to door selling Christian literature, giving Bible studies, and praying with people. However, as the years went by, I started losing that enthusiasm for the spiritual things that had brought me such joy before. I was still attending church on a regular basis and was serving God in the literature ministry, but something was missing. I wasn't experiencing the same joy I had experienced before. I felt I was not growing spiritually.

Maybe you're going through a similar experience in your life. You feel spiritually stuck. Maybe you feel that rather than progressing spiritually, you are regressing.

The real issue is not the fact that you are experiencing spiritual stagnation, rather, the issue is why it is happening to and finding the way to overcome it.

The apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus and advises them the following, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

To begin with, notice that our model for our spiritual growth

should be our Lord Jesus Christ. A lot of Christians get discouraged when they see other Christians not living up to what they profess to believe.

When the Lord Jesus Christ sends the messages to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, notice how He rebukes the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:4, “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” But if you notice in verses 2 and 3, He commends them for their faith: “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”

At the beginning, they did things right. They held on to the faith, even under persecution and hardships. But, evidently, as time went by, the Ephesians lost their enthusiasm in their daily living. As the Lord put it, “they had left their first love.” But it is interesting that when the Lord Jesus points out a problem to us, at the same time, He provides the solution. In verse 5 He says, “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works.”

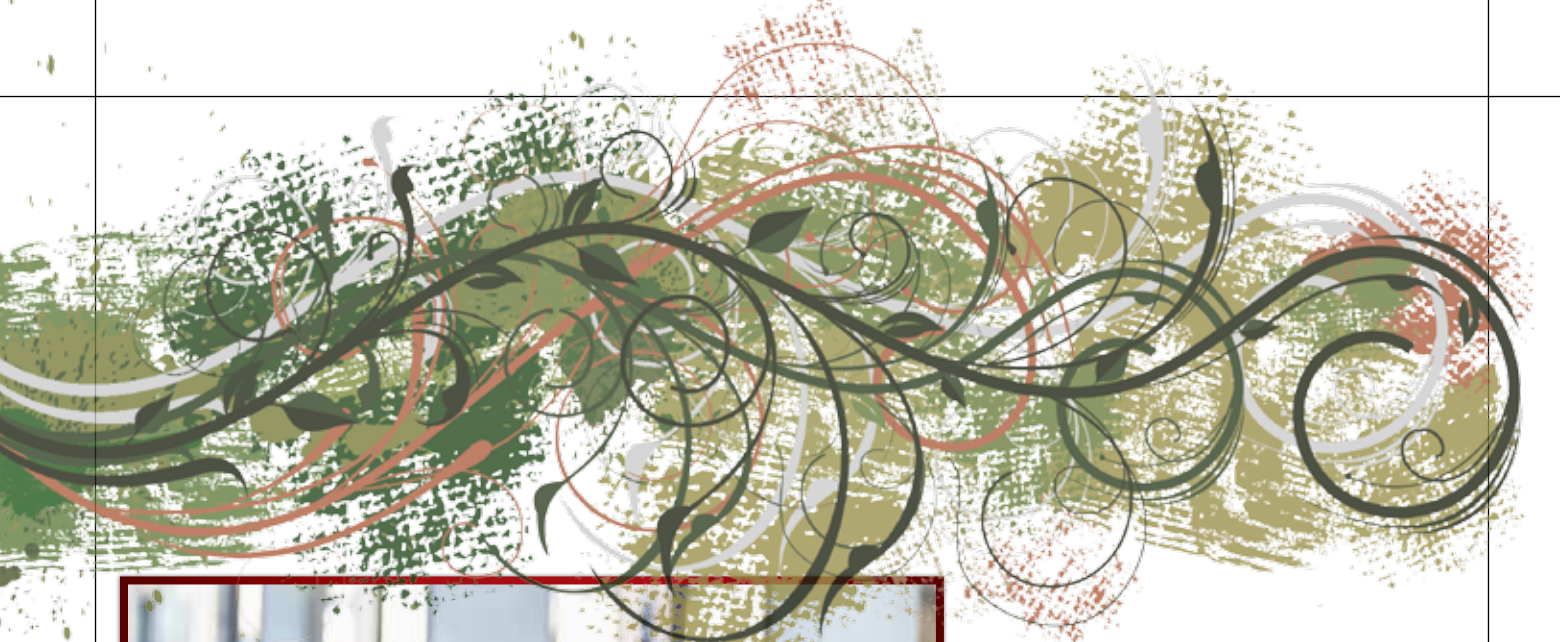
Let us look at you and me. What were the things that you and I did at the beginning of our Christian walk that kept us motivated and excited in our Christian journey? Among the first things

I did, I can think of four that kept my faith kindled and brought joy and happiness into my Christian journey.

Pray regularly: Prayer played an important role in my spiritual growth. Early in my Christian life I learned that there is power in prayer and that God answers prayers. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7, 8, “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you; for everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Prayer is the breath of the soul. Let me explain what I mean by this. I read an article in an American Airlines magazine about the importance of learning how to breathe deeply. I didn’t know that through breathing we eliminate 70 percent of our body’s toxins as we exhale. Sixteen percent is eliminated through perspiration and the other 14 percent by other means. When the toxins of doubt, problems, temptation, and sin are poisoning us, we need to fall on our knees and open our heart to God. We need to tell Him what we are feeling, what we are suffering and experiencing, and then we will discover that we are in fact starting to get rid of those things that are causing us worry, sadness, fear, and pain, and we will find relief for our souls.

Read the Word daily: I feed myself from the Word of God on a daily basis because I learned early on that Bible study is the food of the soul! I learned, also, that there is power in the Word of God! And the reason for this is that He inspired it. In Timothy 3:16, 17 we learn the following, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”





Share your testimony: In my limited Bible knowledge, I was telling others about my faith and about what Jesus meant to me. The other day I was talking to a friend of mine about the importance of testifying about what Jesus has done for us. He said to me, “Eddie, I don’t have a testimony to give, I wish I had one! I grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist home, attended SDA schools. I have always been in the church, never in the world.” As you read this article, maybe you feel the same way. You think like my friend, that only a Christian that used to be a drug addict, a drunk, or a prostitute, has a story to tell, a testimony to give about what Jesus has done for them. My response to my friend was, “You do have a testimony to give! Just think of all the people you grew up with—at the SDA schools, at church, and even at home who no longer remain in the faith, but you

Attend church: I was excited about attending church. I wouldn’t miss church service for anything in the world. We need to be careful and never neglect church attendance. I can’t explain it, but there is a special blessing we receive when we worship God corporately. On Sabbath, I can stay home and worship alone, if I choose to, but I will lose that special blessing. We need to take advantage of every opportunity we have to attend church services—Sabbath services, midweek prayer meeting, evangelistic meetings, youth programs, etc.

In Hebrews 10:25 we find this advice, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”



still do! That is your testimony! Tell others how God has delivered you from temptation, bad habits, and sin each day of your life. By God's grace, you still remain in the faith. Tell others the blessings you have received, as a result of living the Christian life."

Let me tell you about a prayer list I have. In this list I have names of people that I pray for every day. But besides this, each day of the week, I intercede especially for a specific member of my immediate family. Even though I have been doing this for a long time, it was only a few months ago that I told my family members of my prayer practice. It was a Thursday morning, when I was getting ready to pray that God impressed me to send a text message to my oldest daughter. In it I wrote, "I never had told you this, but, every Thursday I pray for you that God will bless you and do something special in your life. Is there anything in particular that you want me to pray on your behalf to God?" Soon I had a response from her via text. She wrote, "Daddy, pray for me that God will give me the strength to make the changes I need to make in my life." I soon replied, "Don't worry about trying to make changes in your life. Just make sure you provide the positive environment in your life, by doing the following things, in order for Him to make those changes in your life." I continued, "**Number one**; pray every day. Communicate with God. Tell Him how you're feeling, what you're experiencing, and how you're suffering. **Number two**; study the Bible daily, even if you don't feel like it. **Number three**; attend church on a regular basis, even if don't feel like it. **Number four**; tell others what Jesus has done for you and what He means to you." I concluded my text with the following, "If you do this, you will not even notice that changes are happening in your life, but others will be able to notice those changes in you."

My dear friend, if you feel you have lost or are losing your first love, and you don't know what to do in order to experience that enthusiasm and joy you used to have for spiritual things, don't despair. There's hope for you. What He has done for others, He can do



for you! Follow Jesus' counsel, "Repent and do the first works." Pray daily, study the Bible daily, attend church on a regular basis, and share your faith with others and you will find that your faith will be rekindled in your life! And you will find joy and happiness in your Christian journey once again!

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

Jessica Lozano, Southwestern Union Record associate editor

Lydia Marie Phillips was raised in the church, a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist. When she was 20, she married a man who was not a Christian and left the church. Lydia's first marriage ended after 13 years. Afterwards, she says, she spiraled out of control.

"I was partying and drinking and doing things I shouldn't have been doing. There were two points during that period when I wanted to commit suicide. During those instances, my mom was there for me. The first time she came and stayed with me to help me through it and the second time

I stayed with her. I'd always felt the knocking,

God tugging at my heart, but I ignored it."

Her second marriage was also doomed because God was not a factor, she says.

"We were married for a little over a year. When we started dating

we went to a couple of churches together, but then we just stopped going. Every time I went to a church, I felt that tugging at my heart. I would be in tears because I knew I needed God, but I ignored it."

With her second marriage ending she spiraled out of control again. Now, nearly 20 years since she first left the church, she was in the midst of her second failed marriage, miserable, and borderline alcoholic. She had hit rock bottom. One night, she



Lydia Marie Phillips was rebaptized in July by Sergio Ochoata at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio after nearly 20 years apart from the church.

didn't know what to do. The only thing she thought to do was to go to her best friend, Ildah. Ildah and her husband, Jon, helped her realize that she needed Jesus in her life.

That night with her friends, Ildah and Jon, saved her life. Ironically, Ildah and Jon were new Adventists. They had been looking for a church and it had been Lydia who had told them about Adventism and introduced them to the Adventist Church through her mother, even though she had not been interested in going to church herself.

"They knew I had been an Adventist and started asking me questions about the church. I told them, if you have questions, the best person to talk to is my mom. They met with my mom and pastor Sergio Ochoata, and they ended up getting baptized. It's funny to think that even though I wasn't going to church, I was still used as a tool to bring people to Him."

Her friends helped her realize that she needed to turn her life around. They contacted their pastor, Sergio Ochoata, and she accepted Jesus back into her life that night. She started doing Bible studies and was rebaptized by Ochoata at the 2015 General Conference session in July in San Antonio, Texas.

"Since being rebaptized, it seems like my life is actually harder. It seems like the devil is trying harder to pull me back. I gave up drinking and I'm still doing Bible studies with Ildah. I'm trying to keep myself busy being involved with activities with the church, because I need to grow and strengthen my relationship with Jesus. The devil is working overtime to pull me back, and I don't want to go back. My mom is constantly praying for me, as she has been, even when I wasn't in the church. I pray that God gives me the strength to resist temptation."

Lydia shares her testimony for the benefit of others and to bring glory to God.

"I don't like to tell my story but it has to be told. God wants it to be told" she says tearfully. She says she knows the importance of sharing her testimony. "If people can learn from my story, and can see how much they need God in their lives, it's worth it."

"I was lost, and I felt that God couldn't love me because of the things that I'd done. My God does love me and He does forgive me. A lot of people feel that they are lost causes, but you can never go too far. You can always turn around and give your life to Jesus. It can be years that you've gone down the wrong path, but if you turn around and accept Jesus as your personal Savior, He will for-

give you! My mom always reminds me, 'God hates the sin but loves the sinner.' He loves you and will forgive *everything* you've done."



WHERE WAS MY MIRACLE?

Sonnett Peterson, Southwestern Union associate IT director

If you do the right things for the right reasons, the right things happen.” This view of “right” Christian living espoused by former Speaker of the House John Boehner represents how many have simplified the Christian faith and God’s promises. The fallacy in this view has the potential to paint God as a liar. Sometimes, even when you do the “right” things, the “wrong” things happen. We sometimes hear of miraculous testimonies and wonder why, even though we have prayed, tithed, loved, and have done all the “right” things, why did bad things happen to me? The belief leads us to wonder if bad things happen, does that mean God doesn’t love me? Or perhaps, I did not pray enough, or in the right way? We can fall into the trap of believing that our circumstances correlate to God’s love.

This is the trap the devil laid for me. My walk with God has been wrought with difficulty over the last two years. Before it all started, I felt that my relationship with Him was strong and real. However, it was founded on an error that nearly destroyed my relationship with God. When finally forced to face the fallacy of my closely held beliefs, I almost lost my way. Rebuilding from the ground up strained my pride and patience, but I praise the Lord for His loyalty. While we didn’t always get along, He was always there for me.

I have faced difficulties. At seven my mother died, and my daddy when I was 21. The dissolution of my marriage, however, proved the hardest and most deeply belief-shattering. Being a wife had always been an important life goal for me. I believe what

God said: it isn’t good for us to be alone; marriage is to be an important part of our existence. I highly value the marriage relationship and it was important for me to know how to go about fostering such a relationship. I read books and listened to the counsel of others. I knew the “right” things to do. My Adventist Christian beliefs were something I needed to share with my husband, so I attended an Adventist university. Pre-marriage counseling addresses unrealized expectations, so my ex-husband and I went. We did all the “right” things to prepare for marriage, but we faced trials I never expected. The loss of the marriage relationship shocked me. My own personal identity had crumbled. Without my knowing it, I had defined myself as a wife. I found myself a single woman, and this loss of identity was the hurdle I had to overcome.

Somehow, this outcome had reduced my moral compass to mere forms and habits. My guiding beliefs were now all up on the chopping block. How could any of it be true? If there was one lie, then there must be more! I had done what I was supposed to do. I was the good, praying wife. I did everything right! The right things were supposed to happen! God didn’t step in with a grand gesture. I wondered, How did I get here? What had just happened? How did this happen to *me*? This was not the “happily ever after” where God worked a miracle and everything worked out perfectly! *Where was my miracle?*

Clinging to my perspective, I wanted some grand intervention. Perhaps this marriage was over but some miracle would give the whole experience meaning. I sat in church and heard the Lord clearly tell me something—not the thing I wanted to hear. He asked me to look at my past, to find the moments that I knew were His intervention and blessings in my life. I made a list, and at the top was this:

While in college, I drove over a hill with the sun in my eyes and I hit the back of a truck. I totaled my car. The car daddy bought to replace it was awful; it ran, but needed a new engine mount. When the car was ready, my sister and I made the long trip home to Louisiana to pick it up. We ate dinner, played a board game, and laid out and watched the stars as a family. Daddy was in an accident three days later and he died. Months before, God blessed me

with the blinding sun, and a totaled car. They paved the way for my sister and I to share a weekend with daddy before it was too late.

With this certainty, God assured me that He had indeed been in *each* instance on my list. The last thing He gave me was less than I wanted. But it was just what I needed. He said: "Look at your past. I was there. I am still here." That was it.

But even this direct assurance from God seemed meaningless to me. It wasn't what I had wanted to come next. It wasn't a salve for the pain or a quick change to my circumstances. It wasn't a prophetic telling of how good things were going to get. It was a heaven-sent "hang in there."

I felt no comfort in the way I wanted. I didn't get my miracle. Was that because I did something wrong? Does God not care about me? Was He even there? I doubted. I wasn't certain of Him, as I had been in the past. Looking at my life I saw no God stepping in to save me from my circumstances. He wouldn't even tell me what to do next. I was angry at God, and it divided me from Him.

God allowed my doubt to surface. I had the opportunity to ask all the questions I could think of. Looking at nature, I knew God was real. But if He was real, then why didn't He care about what was happening to me? My mind was clouded by anger and pain.

The Bible very clearly portrays a God that cares for us with an eternal love. Our concept of the Great Controversy allows for an understanding of our ultimate purpose. We vindicate God's character. He died to save me from my sins; *not* my circumstances. He saves me from sin,

not pain. He cares. The bigger picture, though, is what matters. Pain in this world, in this life, is nothing more than what He said I would have. He waited so patiently while I blamed Him. He longed for me to see just how much He loved me. He suffered as

He saw how sad I was, trying to deal with things on my own. When He sought to soothe my heart with divine assurance, He was answered by my doubts.

No grand love story caps my testimony. There was no great intervention to change my circumstances. Instead, I had to surrender my perception. It was a slow process. God and I discussed my reality as I saw it. When I finally saw my circumstance from His perspective, peace covered my situation. God loved me through the pain, offering no grand overtures; and I was given the miracle of peace. I was able to say to God, "It's OK if it is just you and me. I'm at peace."

In eternity, it may be that each of us will see how God loved us through our pain—without the gratitude He deserved—and our hearts will overflow with love.



Sonnett Peterson



Share Your Faith Without Giving a Bible Study!

When it comes to witnessing and sharing our faith, most church members immediately think of giving a Bible study. In other words, you “share your faith” with another person by giving them a Bible study, or you “witness” to them by answering a theological question regarding our Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs. While there is nothing wrong with those definitions, they really only address a small segment of all that is encompassed in the framework of witnessing or sharing one’s faith. As a pastor for many years, I have come to believe that those limited definitions have held many church members back from actively and enthusiastically sharing their faith. If I believe that I am not equipped to either give a Bible study or answer a question on some Bible topic, then I will more than likely conclude that I am unfit or unable to witness and share

my faith. Nothing could be further from the truth!

The fact of the matter is, we all witness and share our faith simply by the life we model. If I am kind, caring, and loving; if I am honest in all my business dealings and portray a life of integrity; if I model Sabbathkeeping in my neighborhood by not working on my house during Sabbath hours; if I demonstrate concern for my neighbor (whoever that may be), and all the while not ashamed to acknowledge that I am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian—then I have paved a powerful trail of witnessing in behalf of my church and my Lord.

Even if I feel I cannot give a Bible study, I can share my testimony. Each one of us has a story we can share of what Jesus has done for us and how our life has been changed because of what He has done. No one can

argue with your testimony because it is simply your experience with Jesus. When you share the blessedness that Sabbath rest has brought to your life, and that the Sabbath has served as a powerful reminder to you that God is your Creator, you have just shared your faith in a most powerful way. You may not have quoted any Scripture, but you have eloquently communicated Bible truth from the passages of your own experience. Through your personal testimony you can “witness” about what happens when we die, about forgiveness and the plan of salvation, about your hope in the Second Coming of Jesus, or any other of our 28 fundamental beliefs! It is all Bible truth shared out of your own walk with Jesus. That’s sharing your faith without giving a Bible study—and anyone can do that!

Stephen Orian, president

Bentonville Beavers Pathfinder Club

BENTONVILLE, ARK. » The Bentonville Beavers Pathfinder Club proudly recognized several of its members with awards from the 2014-2015 Pathfinder year during a Youth Day church service on August 1, 2015. Meghan Lilly Jones and Isabella Garcia were given the “Young Leaders Award” for their expert planning and implementation of the 3-5 year old VBS program in the church this past summer. Nick Upton, Mykenzie Melo, and Sheldon Glasgow (not pictured) were inducted into the club’s Teen Leadership Training program by Conference Pathfinder direc-

tor Lloyd Clapp. Mykenzie Melo was recognized as the “Pathfinder of the Year” for her willingness to serve, personal initiative,

commitment, and outstanding achievements as a Pathfinder. Finally, Roger and Jan Huff were given the Bentonville Pathfinder

Heritage Award for being instrumental in making the Bentonville Pathfinder Club what it is today. Past recipients of this award include Sharon Boothe (2001), John Hundley (2002), and Joan Fos (2005).

Audra Kohltfarber



Back row, from left: Nick Upton, Lloyd Clapp, Jan Huff, Roger Huff. Front row, from left: Mykenzie Melo, Isabella Garcia, Meghan Lilly Jones.

Heber Springs Church Celebrates 20 Years

HEBER SPRINGS, ARK. » On Sabbath, May 16, the Heber Springs church hosted a special 20-year celebration in memory of former pastor Clarence Hoag at Sandy Beach Park on Greer's Ferry Lake in Heber Springs. Twenty years ago, the Heber Springs congregation had met in a small Baptist church surrounded by a graveyard near town. Before moving to his new pastoral district, Clarence Hoag (who had helped to organize the congregation), took member Mike Welch aside with a request.

“Mike, do what you can

and ready to grow.

Tommy Blunt, pastor, gave a stirring message and special music was provided by the Searcy church youth. Five-



to get this church out of the graveyard,” he said.

After much prayer and diligent effort, the members are now housed in a lovely building on Main Street in Heber Springs. The small congregation continues to make improvements on the building and to let the community know that they are definitely alive

year-old Shelbie Owens sang “Jesus Loves the Little Children.”

We love and appreciate all of the people who attended and give special thanks to

our Heavenly Father for holding off the rain.

Linda Welch

Top right: Shelby Owens, five, sang “Jesus Loves the Little Children.”

Top center: Setting up the sign for the day.

Middle right: Searcy youth provided special music.

Far left: Tommy Blunt, pastor, gave a stirring message.

Bottom middle and right: More than 50 people attended the 20-year celebration.

Health Program at Central Louisiana Church

PINEVILLE, LA. » In August, the entire Central Louisiana church was involved in and energized by the Complete Health Institute program, 35 Days to Good Health with Bernard and Angela Beale from South Texas. Even the young children were excited to pass out brightly-colored flyers emphasizing weight loss potential. The Central Louisiana church is a small congregation and had attendance at the seminar series that rivaled normal church attendance with 30-35 attendees per night. The goal was to share the love of Jesus by promoting God's natural methods of health and wellness.

Three doctors, two dentists, and a diabetic education nurse from a nearby hospital helped to do a brief health screening of the attendees on the first day. After the health screening, meetings were held three evenings per week at a local community center with a simple, enthusiastic lecture by Bernard Beale, followed by an exercise demonstration by local professional exer-

cise trainers, and then a cooking demonstration of simple and delicious food by Angela Beale.

"I tried the black bean patties at home and they were great," said one attendee.

At least two attendees testified that they had dropped two dress sizes in the two short weeks.

"I haven't slept this well in years" said another attendee, after following the simple advice of not eating between meals and not eating late at night.

The series ended with the church starting a walking club. Recently, several members and friends walked and then had breakfast at the home of the church's pastor, Michael Cook, with a healthy breakfast which included pecan and whole wheat pancakes with a fresh peach topping!



Participants in the Central Louisiana church's 35 Days to Good Health program holding their certificates.

The health seminar series helped vitalize the church, not just physically, but spiritually. A Bible study was started. At the graduation exercise, Bernard Beale likened improved health habits to sanctification, a continuous growth process. He encouraged the church and visitors to make a covenant or pledge with God to kick old bad habits and build new good habits. Jesus loves us with an unfathomable love and wants us to be well!

Christine Ince

Student Chooses Adventist Education at GC

SAN ANTONIO, TEX. » After graduating from Spencerville Adventist Academy, I found myself taking my first college classes at a local community college. When classes began, I got into the school rhythm right away. The classes were good, and the teachers were excellent. After two years I could transfer to the University of Maryland. But something was missing.

For weeks and months, I struggled to find myself in the highly competitive and demanding environment. Although I maintained good grades, I kept comparing the people's behaviors and attitudes with my Christian education and upbringing. After two years, I had only one friend, a Muslim girl my age from Pakistan.

This summer, I joined my dad at the Arkansas-Louisiana booth for the General

Conference Session in San Antonio. Some of my classmates from high school were there and we hung out together, visiting the Exhibit Hall's booths and displays. While checking out some of the booths for Adventist colleges, I found my mom at the University of Montemorelos booth, talking to some of her college friends. She introduced me, and one of them started telling me about their plan of studies. After half an hour I was sold.

My dad was very pleased at my interest in the university and offered me a quick trip to see the campus first hand. We got there and visited the campus, walked around, talked to some of the people, checked out the classrooms and the dorms. There was no question in my mind that I had found my place!



Camila Valenzuela was set to attend a public university before going to the General Conference Session in San Antonio where she decided to attend an Adventist college.

It was at the last minute that I had decided to go to San Antonio and attend GC Session. It was the best decision of my life!

Camila Valenzuela

Building Faith through Building



Growing up in an Adventist home, worshipping at an Adventist church and attending an Adventist school, intellectual faith was almost taken for granted. I knew God was there, and I knew that He cared. It wasn't until my late teenage years that I came to understand the fullness of His involvement with me. I was introduced to, and accepted Him as my personal Saviour through saving faith. Soon thereafter I answered His call to ministry and began to experience the joy of what I can only call "ministry faith." That is, letting God take me out of my comfort zone for the good of others and the growth of His kingdom.

The latest example of seeing God work well beyond my abilities is the reason for

the title of this article. The Edmond, Oklahoma church just completed a building project which I now see as a faith-building building. Here are two of the many examples of God's providence. The building committee empowered three of its members to interview prospective design/builder teams. The original plan was to visit with just three such teams, however, as we finished those visits, another company was recommended. Agreeing to interview Landmark Construction was to be a great blessing. After the initial meeting, all three search committee members left with an assurance that God had led to the right company. The working relationship throughout the sixteen months of construction confirmed God's guidance. A quality building was erected, and under budget!

When the time came to present the building plans to the city of Edmond, our project was the last of five requests on the city council's agenda. The first four projects were denied, and we began to wonder how ours would be viewed. After much discussion and questioning our project was unanimously approved! We moved forward in renewed faith that God wanted us to build.

Jesus promised His disciples that as they worked for and with Him, He would be with them always (Matthew 28:20). That promise is still true today. What an awesome God we serve! He builds our personal faith as we, through ministry faith work with Him.

Larry Priest, Oklahoma Conference pastor

The Women Shine on Sabbath at Southern Hills

OKLAHOMA CITY » On Sabbath, August 26, 2015, the Southern Hills church pastor, Vanoy Fitch, and head elder Donald Clark were encouraged to join the men at the men's retreat at Wewoka Woods Adventist Center, so Tamra Clark organized a group of women to take care of the platform for church. The theme for the morning message was "testimonies" by four women: Susan Castillo, Rhonda McFarland, Carol Thomas, and Tamra Clark. Each woman recalled events in their personal lives where God answered prayers, changed circumstances, influenced people, opened doors, or demonstrated His power. The Holy Spirit's influence

was felt during the church service, and everyone was blessed and inspired.

The response was so positive that it was suggested that this type of service, giving testimonies, be implemented every fifth Sabbath. It would get more members involved, and also give people an opportunity to give their personal testimony.

We all have a story of how God has changed and influenced our lives. We need to stand up for Him more often. Christ admonished us in Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." I suggest that our own church family is a good place to begin.

Susan Castillo



From left to right: Tamra Clark, Carol Thomas, and Susan Castillo shared their testimonies at the Southern Hills church during a special Sabbath service.

Celebrating God's Story

EDMOND » Seldom if ever, has a single Sabbath been so filled with inspiration for members of the Edmond church as the fourth Sabbath in August, 2015, when they celebrated the inauguration of their new church. Planners of the celebration made it so huge they couldn't wait for the official beginning of Sabbath. The celebration started 43 minutes before sundown Friday with a welcome by Larry Priest, pastor, followed by a musical program featuring six wonderfully accomplished musicians and musical groups.

The musical theme continued in the Sabbath morning service which drew a record 270 worshipers, many of them former church pastors and members. The music

was provided by world-acclaimed violinist Jaime Jorge and recording artists Henry and Bunny Reid. It was a homecoming for the Reids. Henry served as pastor of the Edmond church for five years, during which time the church purchased the land on which the new church was built.

Following the worship service, a delicious luncheon of lasagna and salad was served prepared by Sam Hutchison, chef at Wewoka Woods Adventist Center. For many, the highlight of the entire Sabbath came after the meal when Jorge presented an hour-long concert of stunning violin artistry, interspersed with stories of his successful evangelism efforts.

The program closed with the official

presentation, acceptance, and consecration of the new building with the key note address by John Moyer, president of the Oklahoma Conference. Moyer challenged the church to follow its own mission statement "to know Jesus, reflect His character, and share His blessings," a mission that he said could be summarized in one word: Jesus.

Kris Bryant

The Edmond church celebrated a high Sabbath with the completion of its new church building. The event featured six musical groups and musicians, as well as a key note address by Oklahoma Conference president John Moyer.



Spiritual Convocation in Duncan

DUNCAN » Sabbath, October 10, was a high Sabbath for the members who live in the Southwest quadrant of the Oklahoma Conference! This spiritual convocation was a continued effort for as many people as possible to have a camp meeting experience in Oklahoma. This was a mini camp meeting for this region.

People came from many of our churches to “Experience the Power,” of what God has done and is doing through the lives and ministries of our members. The whole day was a celebration of praise and worship. Conference officers and department directors participated throughout the day, leading out in Sabbath School and afternoon presentations. John Moyer, Oklahoma Conference president, was the featured speaker for the divine worship service.

O. J. Jackson, pastor of the Lawton-Duncan-Waurika district, conducted a baptism during the worship service, which was one of the highlights of the day.

All this took place in the newly purchased Duncan church. This was only their third Sabbath in the building, and what a way to help inaugurate this new worship center for the glory of God and as a witness to the community of Duncan!

At the end of the day, all, who were present, rejoiced and praised the Lord for His goodness. Each one was already looking forward to the next Spiritual Convocation in 2016!

Richard C. Dye, Sr., executive secretary



New Officers Elected at Southwest Region Conference Constituency Meeting



SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

The Southwest Region Conference held its Quadrennial Constituency Session on Sunday, September 20 at the Keene church in Keene, Texas, where delegates met to elect officers for the 2015-2019 quadrennial term. The following were elected to serve for the next four years: Calvin Watkins, president; Stephen Brooks, executive secretary; and Philip Palmer, treasurer.

Departmental directors elected were Tyrone Douglas, youth and young adult director; Charles Sanders, children's ministries/Sabbath School/stewardship director; Kenn Dixon, communication director; Durandel Ford, Sr., community services/church ministries director; W.S. Lee, Jr., family ministries director; Buford Griffith III, education superintendent; Eddie Polite, ministerial secretary; Stephen Brooks, religious liberty director; Terry Foster, undertreasurer; and Maggie Moore, associate treasurer. The positions of vice president for Hispanic ministries and lay advisor were referred back to the executive committee.

The delegates confirmed the Southwest Region Conference Executive Committee's acceptance of six new congregations into the sisterhood of churches: El Paso Spanish East, El Paso Spanish West, Katy



Top row from left: Kenn Dixon, communication director; Marlene Sanders; Charles Sanders, children's ministries/Sabbath School/stewardship director; Maggie Moore, associate treasurer; Tyrone Douglas, youth and young adult director; Venus Douglas. Middle row from left: Stephen Brooks, executive secretary; Catherine Dixon; Buford Griffith III, education superintendent; Wilma Lee; W.S. Lee, Jr., family ministries director. Front row from left: Durandel Ford, Sr., church ministries and community services director; Janice Ford; Kennetia Brooks; Nilsa Griffith; Ingrid Palmer; Philip Palmer, treasurer. Not Pictured: Calvin Watkins, president; Eddie Polite, ministerial secretary; Terry Foster, undertreasurer.

Spanish, Houston La Esperanza Spanish, Arlington Metro Community church, and San Antonio Breath of Life. The Lake Providence First church was disbanded.

Southwestern Union president Larry Moore closed with prayer and the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Jessica Lozano, *Record* associate editor

Correction

In the list of presidents who have served the Southwest Region Conference, as previously published in the *Record*, one name was mistakenly omitted. We apologize for any inconvenience. The list should have read as follows:

Presidents Who Have Served

W.W. Fordham, 1946-1954; H.R. Murphy, 1954-1956; V.L. Roberts, 1956-1969; W.J. Cleveland, 1969-1976; W.C. Jones, 1976-1986; R.E. Barron, 1986-1990; R.L. Lister, 1990-2001; B.E. Wright, 2001-2012; S.E. Green, 2012-present.

Shiloh Church Community Service: Showing Love by Equipping Children for the New School Year

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. » The Little Rock community was buzzing with preparations to equip students for their new academic journey on the day before the first day of school. Children were filled with anticipation as they got new school clothes and supplies. Not only was the community abuzz,

but the Shiloh church was, too. To show support for families, Shiloh's community service department, headed by Cassandra Crosby and her hardworking team, had a Back-to-School Celebration. It included backpack giveaways, games, presentations, and refreshments. Jeanette Burns provided professional hair stylist services for the

girls. Two police officers in uniform talked with the children about how to be safe on the way to and from school. Another presentation was done by a local community member to make students aware of a local chess club for older children looking for positive afterschool activities.

Students had fun interacting with each other while playing a variety of games. They also enjoyed eating the healthy refreshments provided. The backpacks given away filled with school supplies according to grade level were the highlight of the event for all. The support for students did not end with that celebration, but tutorial services will be offered to students by the Shiloh community service department throughout the school year.



The Shiloh church's community service department provided backpacks to community school children at the start of the school year.

Improving the Health of the Community

Baton Rouge Berean Church Supports Community Health with Anti-Smoking Messages

BATON ROUGE, LA. » "To improve the health of people in its community through health" is an integral part of the mission statement of the Berean Wellness and Community Support Center. The program continues to reflect this portion of its mission through a recent community resource person. It was three years ago that Frankie Poland, regional coordinator for the program "Communities of Color Network" met in Berean's community center with a group of youth who had worked with a summer program. It was there that she addressed them on the dangers of smoking and how the "system" has targeted them at their early age to become smokers. In the audience and observing it all was Lyn Hakeem, director of Berean's Wellness Center.

"There was no denying Poland's passion about the dangers of smoking and the need for policies to reduce the destructive presence

of tobacco advertisements in communities of people of color. It was an opportunity I was not about to let slip away," says Hakeem. Realizing the great potential of joining with Poland and The Louisiana Healthy Communities Coalition, and how Berean's Wellness Center could benefit from such a partnership gave her the courage to ap-

proach Poland. Recently, it was Poland who initiated things by approaching Hakeem regarding doing a presentation on Berean's Wellness Wednesday, a weekly community forum held at the center.

The forum began with Poland announcing her willingness to go wherever the need is and will even provide phone counseling if requested. She continued by enumerating diseases and problems such as osteoporosis, bad breath, amputations, skin wrinkling, diabetes, cancers, pregnancy complications, and heart disease associated with cigarette smoking attributed to the 4,000 to 6,000 chemicals found in cigarettes. "If only the smoking public realized how our innocent, unsuspecting children and youth are susceptible to the adults' smoking habits. Little do those adults know (or even care) about the deadly harm that second-hand smoke is inflicting on their children. Unlike the smoker,



Frankie Poland stands next to "Tobacco Institute Hall of Shame" display of cigarette packets where problems and diseases associated with smoking have replaced brand names of cigarettes

the recipient of second-hand smoke lacks the filters which to some degree lessen the effect," she said passionately. We would also learn that blowing cigarette smoke directly into a non-smoker's face for 30 minutes is equivalent to that person smoking one cigarette. If that weren't bad enough, the announcement that third-hand smoke that clings to clothing, household items, etc. is just as deadly. "Just as there is a 'Quit Smoking' campaign, there is also a subtle one targeting our youth to start smoking.

This is found in the candy mints, bubble gum, and other enticements to introduce our children to smoking and its deadly consequences."

She went on to add her accolades for the many municipalities that have in place protective measures such as no smoking in vehicles with children, and the no smoking bans in work places, various forms of amusement and entertainment, and of course, federal and state modes of transportation. It was with some reluctance that

Poland brought her presentation to an end but not before providing resource information for those struggling with the drive and need to kick the nicotine habit. We applaud Poland's "stop smoking" campaign and agree with Hakeem that "Frankie (does) come alive when she shares with her audience the dangers of smoking." We continue to be grateful for our community resource persons and our center director.

Evelyn M. Edwards and Lyn Hakeem

Two Friends of Berean

BATON ROUGE, LA. » One minister was en route to the General Conference while the other was returning from General Conference. The irony was that each minister would travel close enough to Baton Rouge that he would receive an invitation to present the Sabbath message for that day. The fact that both are close friends of Berean's pastor, Robert Davis, and Davis' family, added impetus to each instance.

It was Alfonzo Greene III, Davis' former Oakwood classmate and current pastor at the First Church in Huntsville, Alabama, who was the first to pause in Baton Rouge on his way to San Antonio. The irony con-

tinued, as on that same Sabbath, the congregation was blessed with the singing ministry of pastor Byron Wells, Sr. of the Southeastern Conference, and his wife. Greene's message "Jesus Wept" directed us to John 11:1 as he reminded the congregations that society has perpetuated the idea that "big boys don't cry" and that tears are a sign of weakness. But, Greene countered, Jesus cried. He then described two instances when Jesus cried: at the death of His friend Lazarus, as detailed in John 11, and when His beloved Jerusalem refused to allow God to be number one in their lives, as reported in Luke 41. In closing, he posed the questions "How will Christ weep for this humanity? Will it

be tears for a resurrected saved Lazarus; or will He shed tears for another lost Jerusalem and their second death? How will He weep for you?" was the question left for us to ponder.

The return trip from the General Conference resulted in South Central's youth director Vandeon Griffin's stopping in Baton Rouge on his way home to Nashville, Tennessee. After his wife, Kimberly, sang, it was on to his message from John 5:1 "An Undeserved Blessing." He began with announcing how God loves to give His people things they don't deserve. Griffin gave an analogy between the occupants around the pool of Bethesda (one in particular) and the members of the Berean church. He said, "Outside Berean as outside Bethesda is a pool—with some just hanging around: the hard-headed, impotent, and blind. They want to be a part of worship, but did not come to worship. People get so comfortable just hanging around other sick people." He continued, telling of how Jesus went to the paraplegic. When Jesus changed the paraplegic's heart, the man couldn't help but be healed. His closing admonition to the Berean church was that "We can't join Jesus without joining His church; only God knows what we're holding on to. Don't let the last half of '15 resemble the first half because God gives us what He wants us to receive, not what we deserve." The Berean church is grateful that over the year, its pastor has maintained contact with these two men of God.

Evelyn Edwards



▲ Pastor and Sis. Byron Wells, Sr. minister in song.



Top right: Vandeon Griffin and Robert Davis, pastors, pause to pose for the camera.



► Alfonzo Greene and Robert Davis, pastors, await worshippers following the church service.



► Kimberly Griffin ministers in song before her husband speaks.

Faith, the Ultimate Answer for Fear



Perhaps the greatest obstacle in the life of the Christian is fear. Spiritual fear, which is driven by the thought that we might miss out on some pleasure in life if we adhere too closely to God's constricting Word, or that at the end of the day, in spite of how hard we've tried and adapted to His instructions, we come up short of heaven. Then there is emotional fear, that if we allow ourselves to become too vulnerable with others they will take advantage of us, ultimately deeply hurting us. So we build walls of emotional protection in our marriages, with our children, with extended family, with our co-workers, between fellow church members and ourselves. And, of course, there are the physical fears that are also devastating, the result of the presence of sin in this world, the horrifying threat of cancer, debilitating long-term disease, and malady. We have no control over these menaces, and what we cannot control terrifies us!

There is, however, the biblical solution and promise found in 1 John 5:4: "For what-

ever is born of God, overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith!" Our Lord plainly tells us there in His never-failing Word that if we are able to build our faith upon Him, His Word, His everlasting track record, we can in fact overcome the world and everything in it that daily challenges our existence and happiness.

Notice the words of Ellen White found in the book *Steps to Christ* p. 53, "God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love and the tenderest compassion. He says, "I take no pleasure in the death of him that dieth...Satan is ever ready to steal away from us the blessed assurances of God. His desire is to take away every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul. But you must not allow him to accomplish this." What an awesome thing to realize that God created men and women with the inalienable right and ability to choose right over wrong. To choose life over death. To choose Christ over Satan. We despair in this because we choose to do so. Our most loving Savior is constantly by

our side, even during those times when we reject Him, He patiently awaits, allowing us as He did in the case of the prodigal son, to come to our senses and wisely choose Him as the Captain of our lives!

As we look out over the landscape of our sick world today, we see the enemy's handiwork. Death, pain, sickness, violence, injustice, no moral compass, the masses wander without a Shepherd, and so we cry out, "Even so Lord Jesus come!" Faith in a God who knows the end from the beginning, who has the best interest of each one of us deep in His heart. He, who guides and directs the affairs of the universe, loves you and cares about the seemingly insignificant details of your life. Draw to memory the words of the Apostle Paul there in 1 Corinthians 3:11-14 - "For NO OTHER foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation (by faith)...their work will endure!" So build for eternity! Don't become weary in well doing! Press forward toward the mark! The King is coming! Will we be ready to meet Him?

Carlos J. Craig

Let's Move Austin

AUSTIN, TEX. » Against the backdrop of a beautiful sunrise, more than 80 brave souls gathered on a cool Sunday morning at Lake Pflugerville. Old and young, the members from the Greater Austin churches came for Let's Move Day. After a short devotion and prayer, the group headed out on the three-mile loop around the lake. Some walked. Some ran. Some ran fast. Some went around more than once. Some stayed behind for low-impact group exercises. And some may have never walked three miles all at once before that day.

All had a wonderful time mingling with each other and other members from the Greater Austin area churches in the midst of the wonderful scenery around the lake. A healthy breakfast was provided for all participants at the end of the walk/run/exercise. We also had a "men's push up challenge" to see who could do the most push-ups. A few took the kayaks out onto the lake to paddle around. A soccer ball and goal posts appeared and an "adults versus kids" game soon materialized.

By the time it was all over, anyone and

everyone who fussed about having to wake up early on a Sunday, or, some other excuse, acknowledged that they actually had a great time. All are looking forward to the next event. See you at our next event, or see you in heaven!

Amy Wan

More than 80 people from the Greater Austin area participated in Let's Move Day at Lake Pflugerville, walking and running on the three-mile loop around the lake.



Mosaic Christian Fellowship Youth Rally

MCKINNEY, TEX. » On the weekend of November 7-8, 2014, Mosaic Christian Fellowship hosted the annual Mosaic Youth Rally, Nothing Between 2014. Students came from surrounding churches, Adventist schools and boarding academies all over Texas to gather in worship and study, housed by Mosaic church members. On Friday night, a fascinating sermon was given by Steve Arrington, speaker and author of several books, on the subject of his life and the salvation experience. Arrested after drug running, Arrington spent time in prison where he found Jesus Christ. His message fascinated the youth and was followed with a performance by Contagious Faith, a band made up of highly talented

Southwestern Adventist University students.

On Sabbath morning, the adults attended first service with the second service being reserved for the youth who came to the Youth Rally. Lee Venden spoke at both services and his sermon produced both tears and laughter in the audience. An al fresco meal followed for the youth.

Events continued throughout the day, including breakout sessions by Arrington and Venden. Arrington elaborated on his experiences after salvation, when he got his dream job as head diver for Jacques Cousteau. He showed footage of his amazing adventures underwater and overseas, meeting sharks, and setting up a success-

ful mission in Fiji. Venden continued in the theme of relationship, which he had started during his Sabbath morning sermons. Some youth left the afternoon programs in order to pray for people outside the church.

At four o'clock, attendees took part in a talent show in which poetry, music, and sign language were presented. Facilitators awarded prizes. At the end of the day, the youth gathered again in the sanctuary for a vespers program led by Venden, who spoke on Mary Magdalene and her wonderful relationship with Jesus as someone who continuously fell at His feet.

Finally, the attendees left the church and reconvened at a gymnasium nearby, where they ate a pizza dinner and played basketball and other games.

The Mosaic Youth Rally was a tremendous success. Youth from all around went back to their homes and schools feeling refreshed and renewed by the Spirit of God.

Emma Winegardner

The Mosaic Youth Rally brought Texas youth together for worship and study with special guests Steve Arrington and Lee Venden.



Burton's Baseball Witnesses

ARLINGTON, TEX. » As the school year came to a close this year, it brought another opportunity to reflect on the past school year's challenges, successes, and memories. A friend of mine asked me to share with her my most memorable event from the last school year. I excitedly told her about a student named Tristen.

To share my favorite memory of the last year, I have to go back two years to the fall of 2013, when a parent came to me with a story about a baseball player his son had been playing with over the summer. This young man, Tristen, had become friends with some of the Burton students that played on the Summer League team and had noticed such a difference in the Burton students that he was asking if he could attend Burton. After our conversation, I was very anxious to meet Tristen myself.

Soon after, I had an appointment with Tristen and his mother as Tristen enrolled in the eighth grade at Burton. Tristen became involved very quickly, already knowing several of the students. After eighth grade graduation, he continued his education in the ninth grade at Burton.

Once in a while, I have the opportunity to fill in for the Religion I teacher and I had the chance to get to know Tristen. While teaching about Jesus calling the disciples and instructing them to "Go, tell others, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The Freshmen were encouraged to "Go, Tell, at Burton." Even as Freshmen, I believed that they could make a difference in their

world. They were to come up with a plan, then put it into action. After missing a few deadlines, I was fearful that perhaps the assignment went over their heads. They were struggling to put their plans into action.

At the end of a particularly difficult week, with people lining up in front of my office door, Tristen and his Religion I partner, Elizabeth, approached my desk. After asking them how I could help them, they responded with their plan for the assign-

be torn off. The poster read: "If you are in need of faith, hope, love, encouragement, or prayer, pull off the appropriate tab." In one day, all the tabs were taken and Tristen and Elizabeth replaced it with a new poster. The last poster said, "If you need prayer, write your name on the poster." Throughout the remainder of the year, I saw many students stopping at their posters.

Shortly after, pastor Kent Rufo informed me that Tristen had requested baptism on



Tristen came to attend Burton Adventist Academy through friendships on a summer league with Burton students. Following his first year there, he gave his life to Christ.

ment. They wanted to put their plan into action and were asking my permission. Finally, the first students from Bible class had understood the assignment and had plans to make a difference at Burton. I was beyond words.

Tristen and Elizabeth's project contained a series of posters to be placed in prominent places around the school. One poster had the words, "Tell the person next to you that Jesus loves them." Another poster had verses on tabs that could

his birthday in May. With much excitement faculty, students, and parents attended Tristen's baptism at the Arlington church. All of heaven and the Burton staff and families rejoiced when one student came to know the Lord.

Through the behavior of a few baseball players, the Holy Spirit worked on the heart of a young man, introducing him to Jesus, who transformed him into a disciple.

Darlene White

Tell What Great Things the Lord has Done for You



TEXICO CONFERENCE

I remember times during my childhood when the members of our church would share stories of their experiences of how God had been present in just the right way, with the perfect solution to their current need, at just the right time. They called it “Testimony Service” and, even for the kids, their stories were interesting.

It is amazing to consider that the God of the universe can be present in our lives that He knows what we are facing in this moment, and He gives us just what we need. We read the stories of His Providence, and we find ourselves wishing that we could see Him work today.

I loved the stories of how God rewarded faith, how He stepped into the needs of those who have lost hope, and how He engages us all to be “Ambassadors of His Goodness.”

I remember hearing my parents tell how God repeated a miracle of provision every day for a week, shortly after my dad decided to follow Jesus and began to work as a literature evangelist. The people that he canvassed were largely farmers who were living from hand to mouth in anticipation of the harvest of their crops when they would have money again.

He went for nearly a month where he took many orders for books but came home each day without having received any payment. As the harvest time approached, my parents

had exhausted their resources as well.

Each morning, they prayed for greater faith and recommitted to doing what they could, trusting that God would be faithful. My heart skips a beat as I recall this part of their story as it confirms that the God who “rained manna in the desert” was active in my family’s needs as well.

On Monday morning, my mom emptied the box of grits into the saucepan of boiling water. It was the last of their breakfast resources, and rather than throwing the empty box in the trash, she put it back on the shelf. The same thing happened with the box of salt, emptied, but returned to the shelf. For the next four days she re-

peated this same process, and each day there was just enough grits and salt for the two of them.

Their 1934 “Model A” Ford had a broken gas gauge and so my dad would “stick the tank” with an old broom handle each morning to see if there was enough gas for the day. And on those same days when God was providing just enough food for breakfast, when my dad put the stick all the way down the filler neck into the gas tank, it was completely dry when he pulled it out.

Together they prayed that God would provide, and my dad would drive away for another day of presenting the books to people. It wasn’t until Friday that week

that he began to find that customers had money to pay for the books that they wanted to purchase.

Stories like that ignite the embers of our faith. These stories represent ways that God reminds us that we can trust Him. It is not up to us to rank His miraculous works. When God provides for whatever we need, His blessing is as profound today as when Jesus delivered the unclean spirit from the man living in the cemetery.

Jesus said to that man what I believe He would say to us today, *Go and tell what great things the Lord has done for you!* (Mark 5:19). I hope that we will share our stories of God’s blessings with others as “Ambassadors of His Goodness.”

Phil Robertson, executive secretary/treasurer



Texico Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the Texico Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists will hold its regular annual meeting at the Albuquerque Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church, 4920 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM on December 6, 2015. This meeting is called to begin at 10:00 AM.

The purpose of this meeting is to receive reports and conduct all other business that may properly come before the members. Delegates who attended the December 15, 2013 Texico Conference Constituency Session are delegates to this Association meeting.

Lee-Roy Chacon, President
Philip Robertson, Exec. Secretary/Treasurer

New Educators for the Texico Conference

CORRALES, N. MEX. » This year the Texico Conference is privileged to have four new educators join the team. Gary Brown will serve as the principal of Sandia View Academy, Melissa Chacon and Elisa Hernandez have taken over the Adventist Academy of Santa Fe, and Myriam Ambriz has begun a new school in Abilene, Texas.

Gary Brown has been in education for 20 years as a teacher and administrator, both in the elementary and secondary level. During his time as an educator, Brown has been responsible for team building, running capital campaigns, developing curriculum, developing alternative learning programs and individualized education plans (IEP's) for at-risk students, as well as marketing and teaching. He has gained a wealth of experience working in California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Idaho. Gary is married to Kathy, a nurse, and they have two sons. Prior to entering education, he worked in the finance field in the areas of risk management and marketing. His new position at Sandia View Academy will offer both challenges and gratification as he continues to bring quality education and spiritual growth to the young people in the Albuquerque area.

Myriam Ambriz will have her hands full as she starts a new school in Abilene. She was born in Mexico and came to the United States with her parents and siblings when she was 12. They settled in the East Texas

area, where her parents began a business in Willis. She is bilingual and loves to run, play soccer, and read. She chose to attend Southwestern Adventist University, where she graduated in May of 2015 with a psychology degree and an elementary teaching certificate for grades K-8. She is excited, not only to begin her first year as a teacher in a one-grade school, but she has to begin almost everything from scratch. However, with her hard work, trust and faith in Jesus, and with the help of her school board, everything was ready for her students when they started school on August 10.

Melissa Chacon has held a special place in my heart, as I was her academy principal for all four years at Sandia View Academy. She showed a lot of talent in her freshman year, I told her then that she should go into teaching and that I wanted to bring her into the teaching staff of the Texico Conference when she graduated. So this spring when she was finishing her senior year at Southwestern Adventist University, I was able to fulfill that plan and she accepted a teaching ministry position as the head teacher at the Adventist Academy of Santa Fe. However, Melissa states that "My decision to become a teacher was truly God-led. Before going to Southwestern Adventist University I was determined to become a family lawyer. I would've stayed on that path if it weren't for God impressing upon me that I needed to go into the teaching profession." Shortly

after school was out, she moved to Santa Fe and began preparing for the school year. When school began, she was ready for the students in grades 5-9 and plunged into the instruction with gusto. She has made a great impression on the students and many of them have indicated that they want to study into the history of Bible times. Melissa believes that she will be able to help many of the students grow in their relationship with Jesus this year.

Elisa Hernandez also has become a teacher at Adventist Academy of Santa Fe after graduating from Southwestern in May 2015. She says, "I am a goal-oriented person that is passionate about helping others in any way that I can." Elisa was not able to attend a Seventh-day Adventist school until her junior year in college when she moved from South Texas to Keene to attend Southwestern Adventist University. She had already obtained an Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice and Corrections from South Texas College in Rio Grande City, when she felt the call to the teaching ministry. That is when she moved north to Southwestern and obtained her degree in psychology. She is teaching grades K-4 at AASF and is enjoying every minute of the time she has with the students as she leads their academics, physical education, and spiritual growth.

Derral Reeve, education superintendent



Gary Brown, principal at Sandia View Academy.



Myriam Ambriz, teacher at Abilene Junior Academy.



Melissa Chacon, teacher at Adventist Academy of Santa Fe.



Elisa Hernandez, teacher at Adventist Academy of Santa Fe.

TEXICO CONFERENCE

Youth Rush: Stronger than Ever

ALBUQUERQUE, N. MEX. » Our church leaders place a great emphasis on evangelism and continually remind the church that “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2). Sometimes we question and doubt whether His words are relevant today. The world around us is in strife, and calamities are ongoing problems. Could there truly be a harvest in the midst of the disaster around us? As we continue to read in Luke 10, Jesus makes a petition to those listening to Him. “Pray to the

were visited in the cities of Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Hobbs, Midland, Snyder, Odessa, and other small towns in the Texico region. We found the harvest which Jesus spoke of in these neighborhoods.

“If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scripture” (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 390). In these very neighborhoods, 1,584 *The Great Controversy* books went out to people desiring to know “What is truth?”

to leave the stacks of Bible study contacts we received with the area churches. The harvest truly is plentiful and is here!

We helped gather the summer season’s harvest in your neighborhoods, but what was also beautiful was that God gathered our hearts while we labored for Him. We were able to see how God answered our prayers time and time again. Commitments were made to follow and serve God. Our prayers became more fervent and real as we studied and experienced prophecy being fulfilled through us in our time.

At the end of the summer, a total revenue of \$144,338 worth of literature was placed in homes and 65 percent of the proceeds are going to help the students continue their Christian education. The work done this summer benefits our church in every way. Our church grew with new converts, there was a spiritual revival in our youth, and it brought in revenue to continue to gather the harvest throughout the seasons to come. The results of the gathering have been positive.



Elizabeth Whetsell and Jason Rich pray before knocking on doors.



2015 Texico Youth Rush team

Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask Him to send more workers into His fields.” God hears and answers our prayers.

This summer 30 young people encountered a plentiful harvest in the Texico Conference. The group of young people made a 10-week commitment to gather the harvest by participating in door-to-door ministry. Through this literature evangelism ministry, approximately 56,400 homes

and 1,013 copies of *The Desire of Ages* books entered homes who wanted to know more about the Man who changed the course of history. A total of 6,487 *Steps to Christ* books went out to those who have been searching for freedom from worry, guilt, and fear. We cannot number the amount of people that we were able to pray with. It gets better! Not only were we able to leave these precious books in the homes, but we were able

There are still souls in the Texico Conference hungering for the Word of God and many people are perishing. God desires that they be reached. “But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?” (Romans 10:14). Will you join us in the gathering of the harvest? It is plentiful.

Carlos Interiano

Spiritually Engaged

Engage! That is the invitation students have heard over and over since the start of the school year. Each year, the Office of Spiritual Life and Development, led by vice president for Spiritual Development Russ Laughlin, prayerfully chooses a theme for the school year. But why *Engage*?

Last year's theme was Pause. The campus was encouraged to pause from daily life and truly give God our time. The campus family went through an entire year of learning how to be still, be quiet, and focus on our relationship with God. From that personal relationship comes the opportunity to *engage* in ministry.

"The idea of the theme is to get people to step up and *engage* in their spiritual life, to be more than observers," explains Michael Gibson, senior theology major and assistant student chaplain. "We are providing as many opportunities as possible for our fellow students to become actively involved in ministry."

"There are a number of programs that we promote around the campus," continues Robert Leslie, a junior education major and assistant student chaplain. "Programs

like Small Groups, Afterglow, Across the Street Ministries, Big Brother and Big Sister, SWAY, Real Talk, and many more. They are all designed to involve students. We understand that not everyone can respond to just one way of ministry, so we try to provide a variety of ministries so that people can join the one they respond to best."

The different ministries do indeed cater to a variety of interests and talents. For example, Real Talk is a program that brings different pastors from the area to campus each week to talk about whatever the students need to talk about. The conversations include questions about the future, how to develop more faith, or sometimes advice. Afterglow is an event that happens every Friday night right after vespers. It's a chance for students to eat some snacks, socialize, pray with some friends, or just talk about the vespers service they just experienced. Big Brother and Sister is a ministry for students to reach out to the community and teach kids. It's a way to get to know local children and become their mentor, providing an extra support system.

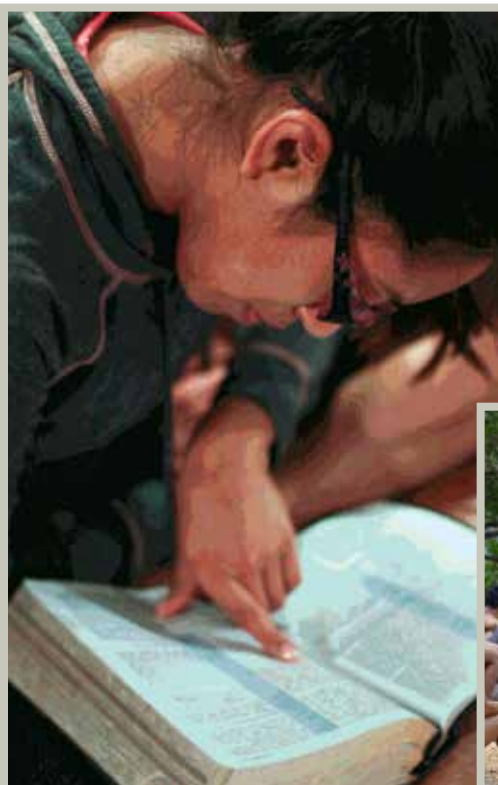
Other programs, like Small Groups, give the students even more leadership possibilities. The groups are held at different times during the week with different spiritual topics and interests and can be started by anyone. Across the Street Ministries allows students to become more actively involved with local churches, giving them an opportunity to learn how to be involved and prepare them for leaving

the university church.

"The theme ties in with our new tagline as well. In the logo for the *Engage* theme, there are three gears: knowledge, faith, and service," Leslie explains. "They have to be working simultaneously to be effective. This tells me that if I have the knowledge that I'm learning here at Southwestern and the personal faith that I am developing in God, I am able to be of service to others and keep myself engaged in ministry."

The theme is also challenging the student chaplains in their spiritual walk as well. "*Engage*, for me, is about not just going through the motions. I want to be spiritually deliberate," shares Jared Cruz, a freshman history major and the Spiritual Life office manager. Ashley Smit, a senior Communication major and Spiritual Life team member, agrees. "*Engage* triggers a reminder for me to participate. If I'm not doing my part, how is God going to use me? It helps me stay involved."

"Personally, coming up with the theme *Engage* and inventing ways to get my fellow students to participate has challenged me to become more deliberate with my own walk," confides Gibson. "It makes me more intentional in my devotions and en-



courages me to put more effort into my relationship with God. I've seen my relationship with Him blossom. And that's what we want for our fellow students."

Julena Allen, freshman communication major



Personnel Changes at the Southwestern Union

BURLESON, TEX. » The Southwestern Union Conference Executive Committee voted on September 15 to ask several individuals at the union office to temporarily assume some of the responsibilities that were filled by Duane and Kathy McKey, who have accepted a call to serve the General Conference in the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department and Office of the President, respectively. Carmen Griffith, women's ministries director, will add Ministerial Spouses coordinator to her duties, while Eddie Canales, vice president for Hispanic Ministries and director of Personal Ministries, will also take up the role of Evangelism coordinator. Minner Labrador, vice president for Ministries, and director of Men's Ministries, Sabbath School, and Stewardship, will also take on the Ministerial director role. These responsibilities will be held until the



Eddie Canales, Southwestern Union vice president and evangelism director



Minner Labrador, Jr., Southwestern Union vice president and ministerial director



Carmen Griffith, Southwestern Union women's ministries director and ministerial spouses coordinator



Robert Dyke, Southwestern Union information technology services assistant director

2016 Southwestern Union constituency meeting to be held in May 2016.

Robert Dyke joined the Southwestern Union on September 1 as assistant director of Information Technology Services (ITS). He is a graduate of Chisholm Trail Academy in Keene, Texas, and later earned a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Southwestern Adventist University. Rob has worked in the IT field for 13 years, ever since his college days. Has been married to his wife, Sarah, for 9 years, and they have two children, Elana, who is 7, and Marshall, who is 5. Rob says, "God opened every door for me to come to the Southwestern Union Conference, and it is a blessing to be able to use my talents to help in God's work."

El Paso Hosts “Let’s Move Day”

“Let’s Move Day” is a health initiative of Adventist Instep for Life promoting physical activity and has occurred every September for the last five years. It is in collaboration with the “Let’s Move” campaign of First Lady Michelle Obama to fight the epidemic of obesity in the nation.

El Paso, Texas hosted the NAD flagship event for this year’s “Let’s Move Day.” El Paso opened the events a week early with a “Free Clinic/Health Expo” on September 13 at El Paso Adventist Junior Academy. Services included medical consultation, cooking shows, health screening for diabetes and hypertension.

Other services included foot care, massage, haircut, hydrotherapy, and mental, lifestyle and spiritual counseling. About seventy volunteers from the community and area Seventh-day Adventist churches participated. Churches that participated were El Paso Central, Northeast, Montana Spanish and Clint SDA churches. It was a joy to see churches coming together for a purpose. Over 140 clients were served. Although small compared to San Antonio’s Pathways to Health, it was indeed the beginning of the vision “Every Church—a Center for Health, Healing and Wholeness.”

This was followed the next weekend with a Health Weekend Retreat September 18-19. A team from the North American Division (NAD), the Southwestern Union Conference Health Ministries Department, and the Texico Conference headed by Katia Reinert, NAD health ministries director/General Conference associate

health ministries director, provided seminars during the weekend. Choices for a full life, sacrificial service, and transformational ministry were echoed over and over. It was a spirit-filled weekend with several churches participating in the program. El Paso Central church was awarded a plaque

loaded with fruits, healthy food and water for everyone. Special guests coming from Health and Human Services, NAD, SWUC and Texico Conference presented the awards for the winners by age groups. Six hundred ten individuals registered for the event. This was the largest participation in the four years of race history. Fifty percent of the participants were from the El Paso community. More than 600 health books were placed in the race packets. A total of 1,773 miles were logged in for “Let’s Move Day.”

As the events came to an end, we can only hold onto the memories of a joyous crowd wearing green and blue shirts. More than 700 people converged at the canyon that day. The Lord be praised for the success, team spirit and camaraderie! El Paso on the Move



► Jose Cortez, NAD ministerial director; Katia Reinert, GC associate health ministries director and former NAD health ministries director; Lee-Roy Chacon, Texico Conference president; and Phil Robertson, Texico Conference executive secretary/treasurer give the runners some encouragement.



from NAD for exemplary leadership in Health Ministries.

The events climaxed on Sunday, September 20 with the Mckelligon Canyon 5K Challenge. It was still dark when a group of volunteers steadily came onto the canyon grounds. Like busy bees, they hurried to do their designated tasks using flashlights and headlamps in the dark. Soon the registration station was flooded with people wanting to pick up their race packets. Many more wanted to register for the race. It was fun for all ages as cheerleaders from local high schools and mascots greeted the finishers. The first 300 5K runners received a finisher medal. At the finish line there were tables

has been joining the “Let’s Move Day” together with local Adventist churches for 4 years now. It has been an eye-opener for the many opportunities it can provide for the church to mingle with the local community.

The health message is the entering wedge of the gospel. Only eternity will tell the impact of this event. Many more will be reached that would not be reached through preaching alone.

Norma Rivera, RN, MN

Classified Ads

REAL ESTATE/HOUSING

Summit Ridge Retirement Village is an Adventist community in a rural setting but close to Oklahoma City medical facilities and shopping. Made up of mostly individual homes, the village has fellowship you'll enjoy. On-site church, independent living, nursing home, and transportation as needed. Website: <http://www.summitridgevillage.org>, or call Bill Norman 405.208.1289.

Enjoy worry-free retirement at Fletcher Park Inn on the Fletcher Academy campus near Hendersonville, NC. Spacious villa homes and limited rental apartments available now. Enjoy a complimentary lunch at our vegetarian buffet on the day of your no-obligation tour. Contact Loretta for details at 1.800.249.2882, or www.fletcherparkinn.com.

EMPLOYMENT

Southwestern Adventist University's Business Department seeks finance faculty to begin Spring or Fall term, 2016. Successful candidate will possess proficiency in previous teaching experience. Candidate should hold earned doctorate in finance or related field. Master's candidate with minimum of 18 graduate hours in finance considered. Instruction in multiple areas, preferred. Send cover letter and CV to Dr. Aaron Moses at mosesa@swau.edu.

The School of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University is seeking applications for a tenure-track faculty position in psychology to begin September 2016. We are seeking an enthusiastic person who will lead and direct WWU's master's program in counseling psychology. An earned doctorate in Clinical or Counseling Psychology or Counselor Education is

required. Applicants should be license-eligible in the State of Washington. For more information and to apply, please visit: <http://jobs.walla.walla.edu>.

Andrews University seeks Admin. Asst. Public Health/Wlms. Responsibilities: provide administrative and office support for Department Chair by handling and managing a variety of tasks required in helping the office to function at a high level of efficiency and professionalism. Manage a variety of general office activities by performing various duties described in the full position description. Qualifications: BA degree or its equivalent. Office and/or classroom equivalent experience. Ability to supervise student assistants, exercise responsible financial management knowledge, and efficiently use Microsoft software applications. Must be a Seventh-day Adventist in good and regular standing. For more information and to apply visit: <https://www.andrews.edu/admres/jobs/876>.

Pacific Union College seeks Public Relations Manager. Candidate should possess a degree/experience in journalism/communications or English. Knowledge and experience in magazine/journal writing, publication, and management. For information visit <http://www.puc.edu/faculty-staff/current-job-postings>.

Pacific Union College seeks Manager for College Market. Candidate should possess a degree/experience in business/management or related field. Knowledge and experience in merchandising, logistics, and financials. For information visit <http://www.puc.edu/faculty-staff/current-job-postings>.

Pacific Union College is a great place to work! Vacancies in hourly positions include **Human Resources Officer; Office**

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Andrews University seeks faculty in Management/Marketing. Responsibilities: Teach Marketing and related courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as performing various duties described in the *full position description*. Qualifications: Doctorate in Marketing as well as sufficient teaching experience in Marketing at the graduate and undergraduate levels and be actively engaged in research, student advising and supervising student projects. For more information and to apply visit: https://www.andrews.edu/admres/jobs/show/faculty#job_6.

Union College seeks Senior Vice President for Academic Administration beginning June 2016. The VPAA leads out in the vision,

strategy, and execution of the college's academic goals. Doctorally qualified SDA candidate will be an experienced leader, innovative thinker, and excellent communicator. See <https://www.ucollege.edu/faculty-openings>. Send CV to Dr. Vinita Sauder, visauder@ucollege.edu.

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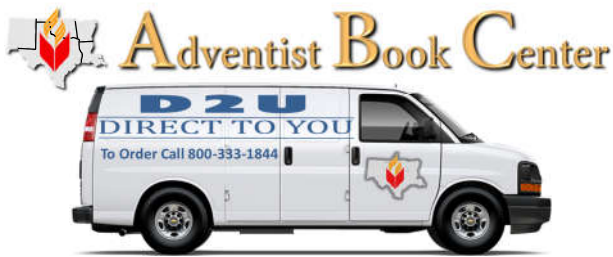
Announcements

2nd Annual Agricultural Conference: "Restoring the Waste Places" Agricultural Conference is November 11-15, 2015 in Glen Rose, Texas. For all seeking to understand and follow God's

plan for agriculture. Register at www.AdventistAg.org.

Pharr Church Celebrates 88

Years: We invite you to celebrate this milestone with the Pharr, Texas, church, December 11-13, 2015. It's a great time for the gathering of former and current church members and ministers, joyfully praising God for His blessings on our church. Begins with Friday night vespers at 7:00 PM. Sabbath worship at 9:30 a.m. Sunday breakfast and fun activities at 9:30 a.m.



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Western Oklahoma / Northern New Mexico Route

We will remain at each stop for 30 minutes

Monday, November 16		Arrive	Depart
Bowie	617 W Wise St, Bowie TX 76230	10:15 AM	10:45 AM
Wichita Falls First	1305 14th St, Wichita Falls TX 76301	11:45 AM	12:15 PM
Vernon Spanish	4701 College Dr, Vernon TX 76384	1:45 PM	2:15 PM
Amarillo	405 S Western St, Amarillo TX 79106	5:15 PM	5:45 PM
Hereford	711 W Park Ave, Hereford TX 79045	6:55 PM	7:25 PM
Tuesday, November 17		Arrive	Depart
Clovis	1501 E Llano Estacado Blvd, Clovis NM 88101	8:10 AM	8:40 AM
Belen	115 E Ross Ave, Belen NM 87002	12:50 PM	1:20 PM
Los Lunas	12 Thomas Rd, Los Lunas NM 87031	2:15 PM	2:45 PM
Albuquerque Central	2201 Estancia Dr NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120	3:35 PM	4:05 PM
Texico Conference Office	777 Sandia View Lane, Corrales, NM, 87048	4:50 PM	5:20 PM
Santa Fe English	130 Rabbit Rd, Santa Fe NM 87508	6:30 PM	7:00 PM
Wednesday, November 18		Arrive	Depart
Las Vegas (Dr Kanode's Office)	1301 8th St, Las Vegas, NM 87701	9:15 AM	9:45 AM
Tucumcari Spanish	1901 S 1st St, Tucumcari NM 88401	11:45 AM	12:15 PM
Dalhart	2 Pheasant Run Rd, Dalhart TX 79022	3:15 PM	3:45 PM
Pioneer Adventist School	1710 N East St, Guymon, OK 73942	5:40 PM	6:10 PM
Thursday, November 19		Arrive	Depart
Shattuck (Old School)	5th St & Summer St, Shattuck OK 73858	10:00 AM	10:30 AM
Woodward	1321 Enterprise Ave, Woodward OK 73801	11:15 AM	11:45 AM
Weatherford	600 W Davis Ave, Weatherford OK 73096	1:30 PM	2:00 PM
Lawton	1610 NW 19th St, Lawton OK 73507	4:00 PM	4:30 PM

Order Deadline for Western Oklahoma/ Northern New Mexico route is Thursday, November 12. Call 800-333-1844 to Order.

Austin/San Antonio/Valley Route

We will remain at each stop for 30 minutes

Monday, November 30		Arrive	Depart
Georgetown, TX	5105 S I-35, Georgetown, TX 78626	10:30 AM	11:00 AM
Austin South	132 Eberhart Ln, Austin, TX 78745	12:15 PM	12:45 PM
San Marcos	1523 Old Ranch Rd 12, San Marcos, TX 78666	2:00 PM	2:30 PM
San Antonio Valley View	6630 FM 1516 Converse, TX 78109	3:45 PM	4:15 PM
San Antonio Highland Hills	2526 Goliad Rd, San Antonio, TX 78223	4:55 PM	5:25 PM
Floresville	724 US Hwy 181 S, Floresville, TX 78114	6:10 PM	6:40 PM
Tuesday, December 1		Arrive	Depart
Beeville	902 N Polk St, Beeville, TX 78102	9:30 AM	10:00 AM
Corpus Christi	6645 Downing St, Corpus Christi, TX 78414	11:30 AM	12:00 PM
Alice	924 N Johnson St, Alice TX 78332	1:45 PM	2:15 PM
Brownsville Spanish	3515 Old Hwy 77, Brownsville, TX 78520	4:45 PM	5:15 PM
Harlingen	20811 Montezuma Rd, Harlingen, TX 78550	6:00 PM	6:30 PM
Weslaco	1200 S Bridge Ave, Weslaco, TX 78596	7:15 PM	7:45 PM
Wednesday, December 2		Arrive	Depart
McAllen Spanish Valley Central	6901 N Ware Rd, McAllen, TX 78504	8:45 AM	9:15 AM
Publicaciones Cristianas	6500 N 10th St, Suite L, McAllen, TX 78504	9:45 AM	10:15 AM
Edinburg	602 W Wisconsin Rd, Edinburg, TX 78539	10:30 AM	11:00 AM
Laredo Spanish North	3919 McPherson Ave	2:30 PM	3:00 PM
San Antonio Laurel Heights	703 W Ashby Pl, San Antonio, TX 78212	6:00 PM	6:30 PM
Thursday, December 3		Arrive	Depart
San Antonio Scenic Hills	11223 Bandera Rd, San Antonio, TX 78250	8:20 AM	8:50 AM
Kerrville	611 Harper Rd, Kerrville, TX 78028	10:05 AM	10:35 AM
Killeen	4700 E Rancier Ave, Killeen, TX 76543	1:50 PM	2:20 PM
Temple	1911 W Avenue H, Temple, TX 76504	3:00 PM	3:30 PM
Waco Mt. Lebanon	4298 Meyers Lane, Waco, TX 76705	4:20 PM	4:50 PM

Order Deadline for the Austin/San Antonio/Valley route is Wednesday, November 25. Call 800-333-1844 to Order.

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Obituaries

PRIEST, Allan, born August 16, 1929 in Globe, Arizona, and died September 9, 2015 in Keene, Texas. After working 30 years in the elevator industry, Allan answered the call to ministry and pastored several Seventh-day Adventist churches throughout Texas for the next 34 years until retirement. Survivors: wife, Jean; son, Larry; daughters, Lynette and Lorraine; as well as many siblings and grandchildren.

PROCTOR, Paul G., born October 11, 1925 in Texas City, Texas, and died September 11, 2015. Paul grew up in La Porte, East of Houston, on the San Jacinto Ship Channel. While attending Valley Grande Academy, he was baptized following a crusade by Bishop A. A. Leiske. After finishing VGA he attended Southwestern Junior College in Keene. He was drafted into the Navy and in 1944 married Lillian Mae Chrispers, whom he had met in Keene. After being discharged from the Navy, he attended school at La Sierra and the Palmer School of Chiroprac-

tic. He returned to Texas and served as a chiropractor, then as an appeals referee. In 1967, the Texas Conference invited him to serve as a pastor. He served as a minister in Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Central California. Upon retirement, he ministered in the Texico Conference. For the past 14 years he has served as pastor of the Hillsboro church. He was inducted in the Southwestern Adventist University Hall of Fame in 2014. Survivors: wife, Lillian; son, David; and three grandchildren.

TAYLOR, Mary Anna, was born August 21, 1932 in New Lebanon, Ohio, and died July 16, 2015 in Fort Worth, Texas. She was a member of the Alvarado church. Survivors: husband, Delbert; son, Charles; and daughters, Julia, Jodie, Diane, Shelia, and Paula.

SABBATH SUNSET CALENDAR

	Nov 6	Nov 13	Nov 20	Nov 27	Dec 4	Dec 11
Abilene, TX	5:45	5:40	5:36	5:34	5:33	5:34
Albuquerque, NM	5:08	5:03	4:59	4:56	4:54	4:55
Amarillo, TX	5:49	5:43	5:39	5:36	5:35	5:35
Brownsville, TX	5:46	5:42	5:40	5:38	5:38	5:39
Dallas, TX	5:33	5:28	5:24	5:21	5:21	5:21
El Paso, TX	5:13	5:08	5:04	5:02	5:01	5:02
Fort Worth/Keene, TX	5:35	5:30	5:26	5:24	5:23	5:23
Gallup, NM	5:16	5:10	5:06	5:03	5:02	5:02
Galveston/Houston, TX	5:32	5:27	5:24	5:22	5:22	5:23
Gentry, AR	5:18	5:12	5:07	5:04	5:03	5:03
Little Rock, AR	5:12	5:06	5:02	4:59	4:58	4:59
Muskogee, OK	5:22	5:17	5:12	5:09	5:08	5:08
New Orleans, LA	5:10	5:06	5:03	5:01	5:00	5:01
Oklahoma City, OK	5:31	5:26	5:21	5:18	5:17	5:17
Roswell, NM	5:03	4:58	4:54	4:51	4:50	4:51
San Antonio, TX	5:45	5:40	5:37	5:35	5:35	5:36
Shreveport, LA	5:21	5:16	5:12	5:10	5:09	5:10
Tulsa, OK	5:24	5:18	5:13	5:10	5:09	5:09

Note: Daylight Savings Time ends at 2:00 a.m. on Nov 1.



On the Record »

BY PAT HUMPHREY » COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR, SOUTHWESTERN UNION

We All Have a Story

I AM WRITING THIS ON THE HEELS OF A VERY IMPACTFUL WEEKEND EXPERIENCE

at a facilitator training program for Adventist Recovery Ministries. (This is a ministry in which participants learn how to lead others in their journey to become free from addictions—not just the ones that typically come to mind, such as drugs and alcohol, but any activity or substance to which we are compulsively driven to indulge in, such as food, gambling, shopping, or even work.) I was deeply moved as we listened to compelling stories of people who had been caught in the grips of addiction or who hopelessly struggled to help a loved one whose life had been ripped apart by addictive behaviors. Each of these people shared how they found hope and healing in the only Source from which life-changing and lasting help is available, and that’s the power of Jesus Christ. Often sniffles could be heard throughout the room as people shared their testimonies, and I too shed a few tears of my own.

But, as I contemplate this month’s *Record* theme which is designed to help our readers build faith by sharing their testimony, the thought occurs to me that even though all of us may not have a dramatic story of recovery and healing from a broken life, we all do have a story to tell. Perhaps you’ve never thought of it like this, but if God has ever done anything in your life, or blessed you in some way—and

surely He has—then you have a testimony!

If you’ve never felt brave enough to share your story, let me remind you that God’s Word promises that He will give you just the right words to say. Here’s a promise from Isaiah (one of my favorite Bible books): “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by

morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned” (Isaiah 50:4, NKJV).

As you contemplate sharing your story, think about what God has done for you. How has the power of God’s Word made a difference in your life? In what ways is your life different today than when you first met Jesus? What could you share about how God has worked in your life that might make a difference in someone else’s life? These are just a few questions to help you begin to formulate your testimony to share with a neighbor, a friend, a relative, or even a complete stranger—someone who needs to know that Jesus is a very real Person who wants to impact their life in a powerful way.

There are millions of people who need to hear a word of hope. Will you be the one to offer it? May your timely testimony be like “apples of gold in a setting of silver” (Proverbs 25:11, ESV).

Pat Humphrey

Record

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