

*Come and hear,
all ye that fear
God, and I will
declare what
he hath done for
my soul.*

Psalm 66:16

The FOURTH MEETING

Randall Murphy

Edwin C. Beck

Larry Owens

John Moyer

EuGene Lewis

Olla Gillham

Frank Barton

Victor Chant

Blanche Yates

Douglas L. English



HE KNOWS MY SHOE SIZE

By Randall Murphy

I WAS teaching church school on the eastern shore of Maryland in the 1960s. My wife, Marty, and I, with our two small boys were trying our best to live on one income, because we thought it best that the boys be at home with Marty. Money was tight, but we had also committed ourselves to be faithful with tithe and as generous as possible with offerings.

I was asked by our pastor to preach the religious liberty sermon in the Forest Grove Church, near Dover, Delaware. During the appeal, at the end of the sermon, I pledged \$10 to purchase Religious Liberty Bonds and encouraged others to match or to do what they could for the cause.

Marty's head snapped up when I announced "our" pledge. She pointed to my shoes, and I clearly understood her message. The only \$10 we had available was the money we had been saving for two months to buy me a much-needed pair of dress shoes. I nodded my understanding, and she later said we would just start saving all over again and that I would need to keep putting new cardboard in my shoes until we could afford new ones. We never mentioned our plight to anyone.

The next week one of my eighth-grade students came to school early with a big sack in hand. "Mr. Murphy, what size shoes do you wear?"

"I wear 9½ D. Why?"

"Mom went to a shoe sale and bought me some shoes, but my feet have grown, and I can't wear them. No one in our house can wear them. Mom wondered if you would be offended if we gave them to you. She said that if you couldn't wear them, I was to give them away to someone who could wear them. I'm glad they are your size, because Mom got them at a sale and can't take them back."

I looked into the sack and found a brown pair of wing tips and a black pair of slip-ons, size 9½ D. The styles fit me perfectly, and so did the shoes.

"Why Eddie, I would be glad to have them. Please thank your mother for shopping for me. How much do I owe her?"

"I don't think she'll take any money."

I tried my best to convince Mrs. Urie to let me pay for the shoes (where I would get the money was another issue), but she and Don would have nothing to do with my paying. Several months later I told them of our pledging the shoe money for religious liberty and how God had used them to supply doubly my dream of a much-needed new pair of shoes.

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19.

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Randall Murphy is president of the Mountain View Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in Parkersburg, West Virginia. He is a member of the Parkersburg Seventh-day Adventist Church.



GOD'S PLAN IS ALWAYS BEST

By Edwin C. Beck

WHEN I WAS called to be a conference president, I tried to do my homework. Before accepting the position, I asked the union president to assess the challenges for that conference. There were two main challenges, he said: One was the need for a strong evangelistic outreach, and the other was to solve the education problems. Maintaining the academies—especially the boarding academies—was draining too much of the conference financial resources.

I accepted the challenges and began my work. Within a year the education department outlined to the conference constituency meeting what the schools needed for both operation and capital. It was clear that the conference didn't have sufficient money to meet these needs. Constituency-meeting delegates, lay advisory members, and believers around the conference were asked to make this a matter of earnest prayer.

Although the matter had been studied for the past fifteen years, the session again appointed new study groups. Their report found that the conference was supporting two boarding academies that were each half-utilized; either one by itself was large enough to accommodate all the boarding students in the conference. After considerable prayer and another two years of study, delegates voted to close one boarding academy.

The decision didn't go over well with some constituents. Closing an academy is never a popular chore, and no one is anxious to do it, for these institutions have very loyal supporters in former students, parents, and community people. However, at a second special constituency meeting, delegates again overwhelmingly voted that one academy must be closed and chose to close the one nearest to a day academy. After all the study and all the prayer, we could only accept that the decision was the Lord's leading. It was my job to carry out that decision. However, constituents who owned houses and lived near the closed academy were understandably very upset. And, quite naturally, the blame fell upon me as conference president.

At the next regular conference session the delegates felt that, although what had been done was needed, the conference needed a new leader to heal the wounds caused by the academy closure. I found myself hurt and without a job, feeling let down and betrayed. Still, I chose to believe that God had not forsaken me.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN!

A few months after the shock I received a call from the General Conference to be church-growth coordinator for the Far Eastern Division. My wife and I had returned from mission service nineteen years before, and we now eagerly accepted the invitation to return and take up responsibilities in the new region.

The work of training pastors and lay elders for church nurture and growth was the most rewarding of my entire ministry. Leading pastors and church elders to effective outreach ministry in evangelistic meetings, and seeing thousands of souls accepting Christ was just the experience I needed.

The academy whose closure had caused so much pain to so many people has become, with the loyal support of its constituency, a self-supporting school. It is proving to be a blessing to a large number of young people.

God does bring tremendous blessings when we follow His leading, even if it seems too painful and difficult to do.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5, 6, NRSV.

Edwin C. Beck is a retired pastor and administrator in Mesa, Arizona. He is a member of the East Mesa Seventh-day Adventist Church.



THE END OF “FUN” AND THE BEGINNING OF FAITHFULNESS

By Larry Owens

THE first time I tried to be independent, I moved out on my own and got an apartment with a friend. Everything was great for a while. Fun, fun, fun. That is, until the bills started piling up. They were hard to deal with. I was always shuffling to pay this one now and putting off that one for later. It got to be a headache.

I went home to visit Mom and Frank. They challenged me to move back home, get another job, and set my feet back on the ground again.

“Okay,” I said. “I’ll do it if I can find a job tomorrow.” The next day I gave it a good shot. By noon God gave me a job at Empire Pipe & Supply in Trusville.

So I started over, back at home. This turned out to be the best thing for me. My family helped me with a budget. I had never used one, so it was tough. The number-one item on the list was tithe. As a kid, I had known about tithing but never seriously practiced it. Tithe was always later, some, or not at all. Now, starting over, I learned that the right way to set up a budget is to put God first. That

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principle was planted very well—so well that in my marriage to Becky it was the way our budget was set up from the start.

One time we got into some financial problems. A check bounced; that started a few others doing the same. It looked bad. So we sat down to figure out what to do. Becky suggested holding tithe over to the next week so we could cover a few more bills and hopefully catch up. It could work. But I shared with her that “it’s not ours to hold till later, and there has to be a better way.”

We decided to return our tithe on schedule. We called up some of the creditors and explained that we were going to be late with their money. That wasn’t easy. But God helped us.

That week we received a letter from our car insurance company. Oh no! Another problem, we thought. But inside was a check repaying us for an overcharge. Who ever heard of such a thing?

After returning tithe on that insurance check, we still were able to cover our needs for that week, and we learned a lesson we will never forget.

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 2 Corinthians 2:9.

Larry Owens is a production manager for Keebler Bakery in Cleveland, Tennessee. He is a member of the Bowman Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cleveland.



BETWEEN FAITH AND DESPAIR

By John Moyer

AT THIRTY-SIX years old, I found the prospect of attending college intimidating. It had been eighteen years since I had graduated from high school. Our family had grown to include five healthy, active boys. We had very little money but a strong belief that God was calling us into the ministry.

We followed the example of Moses for a while, reminding God of how big the problems were and how little we had to contribute to the project. However, doors started to open that only reinforced the call for us to step out in faith and to walk as far as we could see His leading. The staff at Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University) were most supportive, encouraging us that if God was leading us in this direction, He surely would provide for our needs.

Several weeks before classes started, we moved into college housing, and I found a job. Soon I received a letter from the school reminding me that a \$1,000 registration fee had to be paid before I could start classes. In addition to that, four of our boys would need to be enrolled in school (three in elementary and

one in academy). It didn't take a CPA to figure out that my paycheck was not going to cover all of this amount.

For the next two weeks I alternated between faith and despair. I was sure that God was leading, but I couldn't see how He could accomplish this task. A well-meaning friend suggested that I borrow the money, but after praying about this possibility, I didn't feel right about doing it. As the deadline approached, my anxiety level increased. My wife kept reminding me that we were following God's leading while doing everything that we could, and that we could trust Him to provide whatever we needed.

Just a few days before the money was due, a letter came from a friend back home. The line I will always remember was "God has impressed me that you needed this."

In the four years that we were in college, I experienced the same test and God's faithfulness many times. And when graduation day came, we were able to leave school with no debts and a greater trust in God's leading and ability to provide.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5, 6.

John Moyer is secretary of the Oklahoma Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He is a member of the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oklahoma City.



THREE PLEAS, ONE ANSWER

By EuGene Lewis

IN THE SUMMER of 1986 I moved my family to Huntsville, Alabama, so that I could take the ministerial course at Oakwood College. I felt I had been called by God to begin this new career.

The move and educational expenses depleted our financial resources. However, we managed to be faithful to God in our tithe and offerings. The importance of being faithful became a reality to me on December 23, 1986.

Early that morning my youngest son, who was two at the time, asked, "Dad, where are the presents that are supposed to be under the Christmas tree?"

His big brown eyes and tender voice broke my heart. After returning our tithe and offering, we had no money left to buy presents. In fact, I was even short \$200 on the rent. What was I to do? I didn't know how to tell a two-year-old there wouldn't be any presents at Christmas. My heart ached.

At the time I was working as the associate pastor of the College Church. I locked myself in the church sanctuary and prayed as I had never prayed before. I

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pleaded with God about three specific things: (1) My call to the ministry was embarrassing me before my family. Why? (2) I needed \$600 to cover our rent and Christmas expenses. (3) I would continue to serve Him even if He didn't grant my request, but He had to give me the strength to face my family.

After praying I went about my church duties, but throughout the day I looked for God to answer my prayer. When He hadn't answered my prayer by 8 p.m., I stopped looking. I gave up.

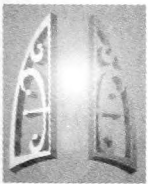
Just then Elder Ward, the senior pastor, stopped by my office and asked me to attend the Christmas party being held in the church cafeteria. I didn't feel like going, and I told him so. He asked me to stop by and see him in his office before I went home.

As promised, at 10 p.m. I went to see Elder Ward. We chatted about church events for awhile. Then he thanked me for my service, and handed me an envelope. I took the envelope, placed it inside my coat pocket, and forgot all about it. The cloud that had hung over my head since morning had gotten heavier. I felt defeated. It was time to face my family, and I would do so empty-handed.

As I got into my car a voice out of nowhere spoke to me: "EuGene, the envelope! The envelope! Open up the envelope!" I opened it, and to my surprise I found \$600. God had arranged for the exact amount I had prayed for that morning. He had chosen to bless me in spite of my failure of faith.

**Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.
Jeremiah 29:12, RSV.**

EuGene Lewis is senior pastor of Emerald City Community Seventh-day Adventist Church in Seattle, Washington.



PRAYER, PATIENCE, AND PERSEVERANCE

By Olla Gillham

IT WAS A wonderful day. As Raymond, Jennifer, and Helen stepped into the baptismal tank, I couldn't stop my tears. My mind raced over the seven years that I had known Raymond. How I remembered the many scenes in the battle that had raged over his soul.

It seemed only yesterday that my quiet night had been disrupted by the shrill ringing of the telephone at a time that I usually don't receive calls. I hoped it was Raymond calling to give a glowing report of the new start he had made for God in Oklahoma as he had promised just a few days earlier.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN!

It was Raymond, all right. He was making his one allotted call from the jail in Altus. Almost methodically I answered his questions. Yes, I would notify his family in Tulia. Of course, I would write. I assured him that I would keep him continually before the Lord in prayer and that I would visit him just as soon as arrangements could be made.

How could this happen after all the prayers and effort that had been spent working for Raymond's salvation? My heart sank, and I acknowledged that only the power of the Holy Spirit could salvage this soul that had become so precious to our little group of believers. We had hoped that he and his family would become the firstfruits of our efforts in Tulia.

"Why?" I asked the Lord. After all, we had studied with Raymond and his wife, had helped them remodel a small frame house so that their family could find independence, and had been joyful as they worshiped with us almost every Sabbath for a year. Things had seemed to be going well, and they had even requested baptism. We had looked forward with eager anticipation to that day.

But the home had broken up. Raymond had returned to drink and drugs. I wondered why God would let this precious family slip away so quickly after all our prayers and effort. Raymond was in jail.

Our little group continued to pray. I continued to correspond as I had promised. Our hopes revived as I received letters from him expressing his love for God and the Adventist message. Soon he was working with others in the jail, and they were writing and asking questions about God. Again we hoped that as soon as he was released, he would turn his life completely over to God and be baptized.

When Raymond was released, we were saddened as he returned to his old ways. It seemed that he was making a studied effort to ignore us. I continued to search for occasions to speak a friendly word and to remind him of God's love.

On his 30th birthday, Raymond and his new friend, Jennifer, came to church. He expressed his need of God's help in overcoming his problems. From that day on, Raymond and Jennifer faithfully attended services. He finally did leave his old life behind, and he says, "God healed me!" He and Jennifer were married.

And now Raymond, Jennifer, and Helen, Jennifer's sister, were being baptized. What else could I do but cry tears of joy? And as if that weren't enough, the same day Raymond and Jennifer also dedicated their infant son to God.

**Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.
Ecclesiastes 11:1.**

Olla Gillham is retired from teaching in Adventist schools. She lives in Tulia, Texas, and is a member of the Tulia Seventh-day Adventist company.



STARING OVER AND DOING IT RIGHT

By Frank Barton

MY WIFE and I both came out of bad first marriages. I was a Catholic, and she was in the Assembly of God. We both had had unpleasant experiences with churches. We didn't know where to turn, but we decided to try to find Bible truth and not just accept whatever somebody was preaching.

When we got married and started thinking about attending a church, my wife said to me, "Would you mind returning tithe on my paycheck? You can do what you want with yours." I told her that we had made a commitment to serve the Lord in our marriage, so even though I didn't have enough money to pay the past month's rent, we were going to tithe on both of our salaries.

The Lord soon led us to the Adventist Church. He has blessed us for our commitment to follow Bible truth and to use the opportunities that He places before all of us to have a part of His ministry through our tithe, offerings, and time.

On many occasions we were thrilled to hear of opportunities and needs in other parts of the world to advance the Lord's work. We felt impressed to give money without calculating the consequences on our own lives. But it seemed that no matter how much we committed to these various projects, we were never without our own needs being met.

Even though we were starting a new life in middle age with five children to support, no home, and many bills, the Lord continued to bless us so much that in twelve years we were able to buy ten acres, a home, and vehicles, and to have them all paid off. I was able to retire at 55 and volunteer full time to building a prison-ministry program in the Florida Conference. In eleven years the Lord has made it grow to 500 volunteers working throughout the conference and affecting about 80 institutions.

In 23 years of marriage, we have never missed paying a bill on time. The Lord has continued to bless us to such an extent that we have lived completely debt-free for about twelve years.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33.

Frank Barton is the coordinator for Florida Prison Ministries with the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He lives in Leesburg, Florida, and is a member of the Lady Lake, Florida, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



“WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING . . .?”

By Victor Chant

IN 1975 the Zambian government announced that a period of military training would be required of all high school graduates at the close of that school year. As we approached the time, students sought out several of us faculty members, asking how they should practice their faith in a military camp. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had already appealed to the government for consideration on two issues—the Sabbath and bearing of arms. The answer that came back was unequivocal: church leaders ought to mind their own business and not interfere, or churches would be closed throughout the country.

Teachers and administrators were in a quandary about how to advise the students. We searched the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy with much prayer, looking for answers to this crisis. When pressed, I began advising students that they would probably have to break the Sabbath and just do what they were forced to do during the months of training. It was the coward's way, but first and foremost I wanted to help save the church in Zambia and keep the young people from hardship.

While we were prayerfully considering all of this, a visitor from the General Conference arrived on campus. A special meeting was called for the staff to meet the visitor. As I sat there in the back corner of the staff room, listening to the presentation, a clear, distinct voice spoke to me: “What do you think you are doing, telling the students to break the Sabbath?”

My cowardly position passed before me, and I saw what I was doing. How could I represent Jesus if I wasn't willing to suffer for Him? I walked out of the staff room that day ready to face prison, deportation, or whatever came my way. I knew that I would speak boldly and encourage the students to keep the Sabbath, no matter what might happen.

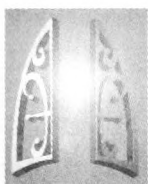
I had walked only a few yards when a couple of students approached me to talk about their military training and what they should do about the Sabbath and their belief in God. I shared the message I had heard and encouraged them to stand for truth and to be willing to suffer whatever might happen to them.

As time passed and our students were taken to military camps, nothing happened to me, even though my name was sent to the government as a security risk because of my witness to the students. I never was deported, nor did I face any hardship. The miracles and triumphs experienced by the students in the camps they were sent to over the ensuing years bear testimony to the power of God to deliver and triumph with His truth. Only eternity will reveal the victories of those students and others who saw God at work in their lives.

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Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12-14, NRSV.

Victor Chant is a teacher and counselor at Fraser Valley Adventist Academy in Aldergrove, British Columbia. He is a member of the Abbotsford, British Columbia, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



ABANDONING MYSELF TO GOD

By Blanche Yates

I'M SORRY, but we can't use you," the store manager said as he shook his head. "Everyone here works every other weekend—no exceptions."

Putting on my bravest smile, I thanked him and headed for the exit. I'd been beating the pavement looking for a job for several weeks. It seemed that I'd tried every business within a 50-mile radius of home. Either they didn't need help or they worked on Sabbath. The constant rejection was hard for a nineteen-year-old to take.

As I got into the car, I looked at my watch and realized that it was close enough to Sabbath that I'd better head for home. I had no more money for gas. The only money in my wallet was the \$30 I'd set aside for tithe and offering. I pondered as I drove home if it wouldn't be wiser to use some of that for gas. Perhaps I could use the offering and not the tithe.

I'd been praying for work, and I'd been persistently looking. But without gas money I couldn't even continue to job-hunt. I felt burdened and unsettled. All of my life I'd returned tithe and offering. It was a "given." But now, for the first time, I faced a strong temptation to borrow some of it.

The struggle continued. But as I arrived at church on Sabbath morning, I made up my mind. I quickly filled out a tithe envelope and sealed it. A special peace settled over me as I dropped it into the offering plate in church. The burden was lifted. For the first time I felt the sweet joy of abandoning myself to God. I sang as I drove home from church.

About an hour after Sabbath lunch the phone rang. I recognized the voice of the last store manager I'd talked to on Friday. He talked excitedly. "I just realized that you said you'd be willing to work every Sunday if you could have Friday nights and Saturdays off. Is that true?"

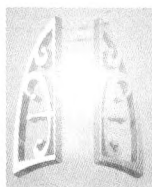
"Yes, that's true."

"Could you start tomorrow morning at nine?"

I had to choke back tears.
“I’ll be there.”

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . . and prove me now . . . , if I will not open you the windows of heaven. Malachi 3:10.

Blanche Yates works at Eden Valley Institute in Loveland, Colorado. She is a member of the Eden Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church.



JACKHAMMER FAITH

By Douglas L. English

THE SUMMER before I began graduate studies at the University of Arkansas, money was tight. By the time I finished a teaching contract on June 15, no summer jobs were available and my graduate-fellowship money would not become available until classes began in late August. Our meager savings were eaten up by moving costs. Susan my wife could not find a job, and the only work I could find was at a temporary employment agency. Every morning I would call at six o’clock, and if they had work for me that day, they called back. I was fortunate when I got two or three days of work a week.

One evening Susan showed me that our checkbook balance came to \$12 and some cents. We had little food in the apartment, rent was due the following week, and after that would come the utility bills. It was clear that something had to happen now, or we would not last until school started.

That night when I said my prayers, I kept them shorter than usual. “Father, I’m in this place because I heard You call me to graduate school. We have no more money. I have been faithful with my tithe, and You promised You would take care of me. It’s time for You to keep Your Word.”

The next morning I didn’t call the agency. They called me, at 5:55 a.m. “Doug, we have a job for you. It’s twelve hours a day, seven days a week, which means plenty of time-and-a-half pay. It lasts all the way until school starts for you in the fall, and you start as soon as you can get here and pick up your time card. Do you want it?”

It was Tuesday, and I figured I could get in four solid twelve-hour days before they fired me for not working on Sabbath. “You bet!” I fairly shouted, racing out to my VW Bug almost before I hung up the phone.

The work was miserable. I broke up concrete all day with a jackhammer. The only respite from that bone-jarring work came when I had to push a wheelbarrow full of rubble onto a truck. At the end of the first day they fired one of the temporary workers for not hustling on the job, perhaps to make a statement to the rest of us. So I really put my back into it, hoping to last even to Sabbath.

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Friday, after I clocked out, I went to the foreman. "Sir," I began with what I hoped was a tone of conviction, "I am a Seventh-day Adventist, and tomorrow is the Sabbath. I won't be here to work, but I need this job. Will I still have it on Sunday?"

He cocked his head to one side and said, "The job's for seven days a week." When he said nothing more, I pressed the issue. "Can I come back Sunday?" He shook his head and said, "I don't know."

With no more assurance than that, I kept the Sabbath. When I clocked in Sunday morning, the foreman said nothing. After another painful week with the jackhammer, I approached him again on Friday.

"I am keeping the Sabbath again tomorrow. Will my job still be here for me Sunday?"

He gave me the same quizzical look he had the week before and then said, "If this is going to be the way it is every week, I'm not sure we can use you."

With nothing to lose, I again asked, "Will you take me on Sunday?" Again, his noncommittal "I don't know" ended our discussion.

Every Friday I told the foreman I would not be in on the Sabbath, asking to be back Sunday. He never gave me any more assurance of work than a simple "I don't know," but he never fired me when I returned on Sunday morning.

As it turned out, my arthritic knee couldn't keep up the pace all the way until school started, and I had to quit. But by the time it gave out, Susan was working, and my overtime pay was enough to carry us to the start of graduate studies.

Knowing such a God who answers so suddenly in time of need and sustains so faithfully when we have no other assurance, how could we deny His claims on our time or finances?

I know the blessing of tithing, and I know the blessing of the Sabbath. I commend them to anyone willing to receive them.

Them that honour me I will honour. 1 Samuel 2:30.

Douglas L. English is pastor of the Muskegon, Michigan, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

*You have a stewardship testimony you need to share
and we need to read. See page 224 for details.*