

The SECOND MEETING

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

Psalm 66:16

Mack Tennyson

Bob A. Dodd

Don Jacobsen

Christof W. Kober

Mumtaz A. Fargo

Elmer Malcolm

Naomi A. Yamashiro

Stephen Gifford

Shirley Fordham

Gary Patterson



FAITH AND FIFTEEN PERCENT

By Mack Tennyson

I BECAME a Seventh-day Adventist when I was a 25-year-old college student. This was in the mid-1970s, when the church was pushing its “10+10+” program. On my meager college student’s salary it was easy to make a commitment to tithing. Ten percent of virtually nothing is virtually nothing. And, as the +10 program called for, I was fully willing to double it for the sake of the work. After graduation I took a job working for a CPA firm and continued to tithe and pay the “+10” offering. After several years my salary was increasing nicely, and my wife and I were looking forward to the child-rearing years and buying a new house.

About this time God convicted me that He wanted me to go to graduate school and get my Ph.D. in accounting. This would mean several years of financial struggle and delaying having children. My wife was against it. I worked out a budget on how we could afford to go. The budget included tithe but not any offering. I wanted to show her that we could manage financially.

“Look at these numbers,” I said. “We won’t starve. I have it all worked out.”

“Where is the budget for the offerings?”

“Well, I left it out. I can’t imagine God would mind if we skip it while we’re in graduate school.”

“Going to graduate school surely can’t be God’s will if it means that we have to quit giving offerings.”

I got mad and said, “Since it’s going to take a miracle to pay for it anyway, let’s increase the offering amount to 15 percent.”

In the next month a miraculous sequence of events convinced my wife that going to graduate school was not such a bad idea.

Once there, I was sure we were going to starve, but we kept our word to return the tithe plus the 15-percent offering. Then a sequence of little miracles showed me that God was going to keep us from starving: unexpected government refunds, tires that seemed to last forever. After about nine months of living hand-to-mouth, one of the graduate faculty asked me to work on a consulting job with him. He astonished me when he told me what the consulting job would pay. I’d earn as much as in the full-time job I had left to come to graduate school. To me it was a certain miracle that God led this faculty member whom I hardly knew to ask me to join him on the project.

As I left that man’s office I was overwhelmed—not so much with happiness about the money itself, but with the reality of God. In my mind He was changing from a theoretical spiritual abstraction to a living God concerned with my simple problems and needs.

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 1 Corinthians 2:12, NIV.

Mack Tennyson is professor of accountancy at the University of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina. He is a member of the Charleston Seventh-day Adventist Church.



ANGEL IN BLUE JEANS

By Bob A. Dodd

AUNTIE, come sit on the bed, close your eyes, and hold out your hands!" This was the way Bernie excitedly told my wife to expect a surprise.

When my wife and I were on mission appointment in Sri Lanka, the union where I was serving as treasurer needed to build several small churches. I didn't have a definite commitment from anyone for financing these churches, but I had faith to believe that somehow God would hear our prayers and send help.

I often rode my small motor scooter from home to the office and then to the local café for lunch. One day after I had eaten and was preparing to return to work, a young American man named Bernie approached me and asked if there was a self-service laundry nearby. I told him there wasn't, but if he would climb onto the back of my scooter, I would take him to my home, and my wife would wash his clothes.

Bernie gratefully jumped on behind me, and we were on our way to the washing machine.

Realizing that he was traveling very light (two shirts and a pair of blue jeans), my wife gave him another shirt and another pair of blue jeans. We also told him that our home could be his home base while he was in Sri Lanka. He graciously accepted our invitation to be our guest and continued to come and go for several weeks as he visited the island's attractions.

After Bernie learned that we were Christians and were trying to raise money to build two or three small churches (our conversations and our prayers were on that topic every night), he wanted to try to repay our kindness to him. We assured him that we were glad to help him and wished him well on his journey but that we did not want any remuneration.

He told me he needed to go to the bank before he left Sri Lanka, so I dropped him off there one morning on my way to work.

Bernie returned to our house from the bank, and that was when my wife heard his excited request to close her eyes and hold out her hands.

A shower of 10,000 rupees (the equivalent of US\$2,100 in the local currency) fell into her lap. And thus was born another small church building in Sri Lanka.

Before Bernie flew on to England, he told us that he was the grandson of a

very influential American businessman and was traveling with a very large letter of credit. He did not need our services, but because we were willing to devote a small portion of our time entertaining him, we were permitted to be an instrument in God's plan for building another small sanctuary.

Hospitality is stewardship, too.

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2, NIV.

Bob A. Dodd retired in 1997 as president of East Pasco Medical Center in Zephyrhills, Florida. He is a member of the East Pasco Seventh-day Adventist Church in Dade City.



SOMEBODY TAMPERED WITH THE MAIL

By Don Jacobsen

MY FAMILY and I had just moved to Andrews University to join the faculty. It was an exhilarating move for us to be on that high-octane campus. It was also an expensive one, including the need to budget for our two boys to attend church school. We found a house, got more or less unpacked and curtained, and settled into the frantic routine that permeates a university campus.

The time came to pay our first bills in this new place. I sat down to write checks out of our newly opened account at the local bank. I could sense immediately we were going to be a bit short of two essential commodities—temporary check blanks the bank had given us and money. I started actually totaling up the disbursements, listing our tithe and offerings first. That had been our lifelong practice. Then I listed the bills. When I totaled income against expense at the bottom of the page, I discovered to my surprise that it worked out. We *did* have money for all the essentials, and I was only one check blank short.

So I wrote the checks and addressed, sealed, and stamped all the envelopes but one. In the last blank envelope I placed the payment coupon for our car payment and \$150 cash. I planned to buy a money order and finish preparing that payment when I went by the post office the next morning. I put a rubber band around the whole stack and put it in my briefcase.

But the next morning I forgot about that last blank envelope with the cash in it. I simply dropped the whole stack of envelopes in the mailbox. It completely slipped my mind that the bottom envelope needed a check or money order, a mailing address, and a stamp. Even our return address wasn't on the envelope. All that was inside was the payment coupon (without our name on it) and the \$150 in cash.

Later in the day it hit me. Frantically I phoned the postmaster to see if the mail had been taken from that box. It had. Had it left town? It had. Any way I could trace it? None.

“Lord,” Ruthie and I prayed, “we really need Your help. We need to have an honest person find that envelope and somehow get it back to us. Granted, it wasn’t a very bright thing to do, but we need a big miracle right now.”

Nothing. No phone call. No message from the post office. Nothing. Each day we rushed home and looked through the mail. Nothing. Panic may be too strong a word, but we were deeply concerned because we didn’t have \$150 worth of flexibility in our budget.

A couple days later I called the company where our car was financed. Had they perhaps received a payment from us recently—in cash? Sorry, no. Obviously someone along the way had benefited handsomely from my carelessness.

Two more days went by, and I decided to call again, just in case. Searching her computer screen, the customer service agent paused a moment, then replied, “Yes, the full amount was posted yesterday. Your account is current, Mr. Jacobsen.” I numbly mumbled my thanks and hung up.

This was clearly praise time at our house. God had been faithful, and that envelope had fallen into the hands of an honest person. Somebody tampered with the mail. He or she found the envelope, opened it, saw the money, took out the payment coupon, found the name of the company for whom it was intended, addressed the envelope, put a stamp on it, and sent it on its way—with all \$150 inside.

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. 1 Corinthians 1:9, NIV.

Don Jacobsen is president of Adventist World Radio in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a member of the Atholton Seventh-day Adventist Church in Columbia, Maryland.



THE BLESSING OF A MISERABLE DAY

By Christof W. Kober

FAITHFULNESS to God in tithes and offerings has always been the hallmark of our family. I learned the lesson early.

As World War II was coming to an end in March of 1945 my father, who was a medic in the German army, was captured by advancing Russian troops and spent the next four and a half years in a Russian prison camp. My mother and we four

children, ranging in age from 3 to 11, went on welfare. Food was scarce, and money was almost worthless. Yet mother was very particular about tithes and offerings. From the meager sustenance we received from the city, my mother selected the best-looking bills and shiniest coins to give as tithe and a love offering to God. This was an outward expression of an inner grace—love for her God.

Early in May 1945 the war ended, and people had little to eat. Food could be obtained only with ration cards. But my family had some potatoes stored in the community basement of the building where we were living. Mother had calculated that they would last us until the fall harvest. By May, however, she noticed that our potatoes were disappearing. Somebody was stealing them. We no longer had enough to last us until fall.

About a week later I heard about a local German farmer who had fled the advancing Russian army. The previous fall, according to the usual practice, the farmer had stored his potatoes in the ground out in his field. Now he had left those potatoes free for the taking. The day we heard the good news was a warm, sunny, late Wednesday afternoon. My mother made quick plans to get an early start the next day.

Thursday dawned cold, sleety, and rainy, but mother and I took our little hand wagon and made our way to the field. About halfway there, Mother saw that I was very cold and sent me home. She was less than five feet tall and not very strong, but she gathered as many potatoes as she could pull through the rain and the mud in that little wagon. Friday was still chilly and rainy, but Mother and a younger, stronger woman went together and brought back more potatoes. During those two cold, rainy days, nobody else picked potatoes in that field.

Sabbath dawned warm and bright—a gorgeous day. We went to church. And on that day Mother prayed, “Lord, why did You send rain, sleet and miserable cold weather while we gathered potatoes out in the field? You knew, Lord, that we needed those potatoes. We could have gathered more if the weather had been pleasant. Tomorrow, if the sun shines, I will go again!”

Sunday was another beautiful day. Mother and I returned to the field and began gathering potatoes. A Russian soldier suddenly appeared and accused her of stealing the Russian soldiers’ potatoes. Apparently the field had been confiscated by the occupying army. Mother insisted that we had understood the potatoes were unclaimed, but the soldier quickly left to bring the commandant to arrest her. Fearing Mother might be locked up for several weeks or months, we immediately started home without any potatoes.

Soon the commandant and soldier roared up behind us on a motorcycle with a sidecar. They slowed down without stopping, drove a few yards past us, turned around and came toward us, slowed down, looked at us, and then drove off.

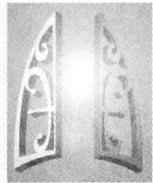
The measure of God’s providence became clear to us as we hurried home. Now we understood the blessing of that miserable Thursday and Friday. The bad

weather had kept everyone—even the Russian soldiers—away just long enough for her to get some much-needed food.

“Thank You, Lord,” we said, “for that sleet, rain, and miserable weather on Thursday and Friday!”

I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. Psalm 37:25.

Christof W. Kober is director of stewardship of the Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Staunton, Virginia. He is a member of the Staunton Seventh-day Adventist Church.



FAITH AND ACTION IN KUWAIT CITY

By Mumtaz A. Fargo

AS THE school year ended at Middle East College in 1957, my roommate Camille and I, veteran colporteurs, went on a pioneering mission to canvass in Kuwait. We felt it was God’s invitation, a journey for two ambitious youth.

Excitement and trepidation filled us as we headed for Kuwait City. Excitement because we were going to a new area. Trepidation because we had no Adventist connection; we were entirely on our own.

Our books made the trip to Kuwait in good shape, even if Camille and I didn’t. A flu epidemic hit, and we were among the victims. A week in the hospital left our resources of both energy and money seriously depleted. We had to make some sales quickly if we wanted to eat.

Visiting homes in the conservative Muslim country was out of the question, so on our first morning we began canvassing in the heart of Kuwait’s business district. Three long hours passed, and we had no sales. Discouragement and doubts knotted inside us. We considered leaving, but had no money. “God,” I questioned, “did You really lead us to this place?”

Looking up, I saw a building with a sign that said “Ministry of Justice.” Hesitating at the gate, we asked God to intervene on our behalf. “Go before us,” we prayed.

We opened a series of large doors and found ourselves in a courtroom. Three justices were at the bench facing us. A trial was in session.

We proceeded down the aisle toward the bench. I felt convicted to speak. “Your Honor,” I addressed the chief justice.

He studied us carefully.

“We have a very important matter to discuss with you.”

Camille started to speak. The judge looked puzzled, obviously caught off guard by the sudden vibrancy of Camille's voice. "We'll take a short recess," announced the judge, either eager to hear what we had to say or simply to dispense with us quietly.

Camille began handing him our books, one after another. A look of interest flickered in the judge's eyes as he fingered the volumes. "How much?" he asked, pulling out his wallet. I quoted him some prices.

He purchased several copies for himself and his associates. As he handed me the money, I realized that it was more than what I had quoted to him. "That is a gift for the two of you," he said, not giving me an opportunity to protest.

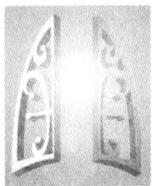
We decided to reciprocate his gift by writing a 10-year subscription to our health journal. When we handed him the receipt, he gave us more money to pay for the subscription too. Thanking him for the gifts, we asked if we could approach the other employees and use his name as a reference. He agreed to both requests.

At the end of the first day our sales exceeded what we had hoped to sell in an entire week. The literature that we had brought for three months sold out in six weeks. We returned to the business district that earlier had tested our faith. Now, even people who once declined bought our books.

God's invitation for us to work with Him required faith and action. Our time and talents were valuable only when we were where God was working, so He could accomplish what He had purposed to do.

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10, NASB.

Mumtaz A. Fargo is professor and chairman of the department of history at Montana State University at Billings. He is a member of the Billings Seventh-day Adventist Church.



A STEP FARTHER IN FAITH

By Elmer Malcolm

ONE SUMMER when I was a teenager, my summer job took me from Virginia to Silver Spring, Maryland, where I received Bible studies for six weeks from a brick mason. I was baptized into the Adventist Church and returned to a small school in Virginia to complete my high school education.

Although I had only limited exposure to the basic teachings of the Bible, the Lord gave me the desire and strength to practice His principles in an environment where complete ignorance of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs prevailed. Deprived of association with fellow believers for the school year and challenged by a hostile environment, I found that the Lord kept His promise to strengthen, guide, and

T H E S E C O N D M E E T I N G

comfort. Someone introduced me to the Voice of Prophecy Bible lessons, and they became my Sabbath study and worship. Odd jobs provided some income, which gave me the obligation and privilege to tithe. Since I had no knowledge of the storehouse principle, I sent 10 percent of my income as a donation to the Voice of Prophecy. Two years after high school I returned to Maryland to enroll at Columbia Union College. I attended the Silver Spring Seventh-day Adventist Church, where I had been baptized.

One day a professor in my Bible class, speaking of the generosity practiced by some Israelites, suggested 20 percent as a giving guide for tithes and offerings to the church. Although I was totally responsible for all my living and educational expenses, I adopted the plan. The Lord blessed me with faith, confidence, and endurance. I was able to pay for my college education, and during those years I also paid for a new car. Following marriage, my wife and I were impressed to increase our giving to 25 percent. As time progressed and the family increased (two children), so did our contributions. In the early years of my ministry as a pastor, my wife was not employed out of the home. However, with the Lord's blessing we were able to increase our giving up to 35 percent of my salary.

Through the years it has been a satisfying experience to be able to tithe, give generously to the local church and worldwide church needs, and have additional funds to support special projects as the Holy Spirit directs.

The Lord has kept His promises to us by supplying all our needs.

Why this frank testimony, a testimony that some readers may feel has turned from praise to boasting? Today, perhaps as never before, we have marvelous opportunities to advance the Lord's work throughout the world. And yet there is a continual lack of resources to meet the opportunities.

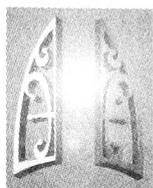
Many members seem to have forgotten, or never have been taught, that tithe—the first 10 percent—is only the beginning, and not the end, of a faith relationship with the Lord. I was blessed to learn that lesson early in my life.

Some members, perhaps, feel that the local church would grow if only more of the tithe could be used locally. At the same time, I often see among us a passion for the best cars, recreational vehicles, the latest electronic equipment, and all the other charming devices of our age. And then I see only a tithe or maybe an occasional tip to the Lord's work—a work we claim to love and yet a work chronically malnourished for means.

I know from experience how abundantly God would supply the church needs and govern our wants if we took a step farther in faith.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:24.

Elmer Malcolm, now living in New Market, Virginia, retired in 1997 as president of the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Portland, Maine. He is a member of the Freeport, Maine, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



FREE TO SHARE

By Naomi A. Yamashiro

MANAGING the six-story, 50-unit furnished apartment complex in the Waikiki area of Hawaii was taking up too much of my time.

I wanted to have a more active part in the church's mission to spread the good news about God's love. I wanted to nurture members in our little church in Kailua. This apartment complex was getting in the way.

I turned the problem over to the Lord. If He saw fit to use me in my community, would He help me sell the apartment complex? We sold the apartments in a few months at the listed price.

A few weeks later at camp meeting a young Samoan woman sat next to me and asked if I would give her and her sister Bible studies. Out of reflex, I almost said I wouldn't have time, but then I remembered my commitment to God. I quickly replied that I'd be glad to.

Bible studies began the next week with the two young women. Soon we had several women joining us each week. We had new church members, women from dysfunctional homes, women married to unbelievers. We learned to claim the thousands of promises found in the Bible.

Several of the women still tell me that they would not be married to their husbands today or they would not be Adventists if it were not for the promises they had learned to claim during those Bible studies. We had remarkable answers to prayers for alcoholic, abusive or unfaithful husbands, wayward children, and angry, hurt women. Divorces were prevented, and now these women say they wouldn't exchange their husbands for anyone because of the changes brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit in answer to our prayers.

I also had time and opportunity to witness to some servicemen and women who were stationed about a mile away from our beach home. We started inviting them—many of them homesick—to our home on Friday evenings for home-cooked meals and fellowship. After the meal we had worship and Bible studies conducted by my husband, Charles. Over time 30 young men and women were led to Christ through this practice.

Witnessing the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in changing the lives of these servicemen and women was most rewarding and inspiring.

Selling that apartment complex not only gave me time to reach out with the gospel message but also provided money to help some of the servicemen and women attain higher education in Adventist colleges. I'm regularly gratified to receive cards and phone calls during the holidays from some of these men and

women who let us know that they are serving God in their communities and churches where they attend.

Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:33, 34, NIV.

Naomi A. Yamashiro is a member of the General Conference, North American Division, Pacific Union, and Hawaii Conference committees. She is a member of the Kailua, Hawaii, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



A WEDDING, A CAR, AND A CRISIS

By Stephen Gifford

SORRY, Steve, but I've decided not to buy your car," my brother-in-law said as he handed me the keys to my 1954 Ford. I had given him the car on his promise to pay me \$200 at the end of the summer. He had used my immaculate, well-maintained car like a truck, and now it stood a ghost of its former self.

That was August 15, 1963, just three days before my wedding. The \$720 I'd earned during the summer, after tithing, would leave me with enough to pay off my Union College bill and have a little left for other purposes. I had planned to use the \$200 from the car for my new bride and me to live on until my seminary sponsorship kicked in. Without it I had no idea how we would manage. What a time to have to be distracted by those worries!

Sabbath, August 17, I sat in the Piedmont Park church in Lincoln, debating whether to return tithing on the \$720 of my summer earnings. Surely the Lord would understand if I borrowed the money for a while. This was the weekend of my marriage—after baptism, the most important and happiest spiritual event of my life. Would He really want it clouded by the gnawing worries of not having a little cash security in my pocket?

The envelope went in and out of my coat pocket several times as my struggle raged on. When the offering plate came by, faith and conscience won out. My slim billfold was now down to a \$20 bill and a \$5 bill.

After the wedding ceremony the next day, I gave the minister, Elder Perry Green, the \$5 bill. He immediately gave it back to my bride, Beverly. Had I known he was going to do that, I cheerfully would have given him the \$20 bill.

With a Mobil credit card and a small amount of cash received as wedding gifts, we took a very brief honeymoon. In Iowa a motel owner had only one room left, a beautiful suite. "Are you newly married?" he inquired. I admitted

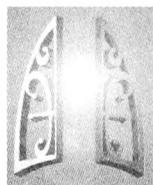
we were. He gave us the suite for \$10, half the regular rate.

A few days later we were settled in Andrews University housing. Beverly applied for a job as a teacher in a local public school, but no teaching jobs seemed to be available. The school board president looked at her and her qualifications and said, "I had planned to give the job to another applicant, but I haven't signed a contract. I'll hire you if you'll sign a contract right now." I went door to door soliciting house-painting jobs. Soon we had more than an adequate income.

Within two weeks God had taken care of us in a marvelous way. And since that memorable time more than three decades ago I have never again been tempted to borrow the Lord's money.

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8, RSV.

Stephen Gifford is president of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Alvarado, Texas. He is a member of the Burlleson, Texas, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



\$250,000 POORER AND RICHER

By Shirley Fordham

TWENTY-TWO years. That's how long our investment in Christian education lasted. Skoog, Puck, and Evelyn attended Adventist schools from first grade through college. We had no idea that this investment would engulf our entire lives—but it did.

Were we pleased? Not always.

Coordinating transportation was a major problem every year. And tuition was outrageous—even for first grade. As expensive as the schools were, one would think that they'd have the best facilities in the nation, but they didn't. Our children weren't always treated fairly. Prejudice did (and does) exist in Adventist schools. Sometimes we wondered how certain teachers got into the profession.

The academy was 22 hours away. We saw our children only during winter and summer vacations. Fortunately they were able to room and board with relatives. Trips home by plane seemed cheaper than the telephone bills. And every time we turned around, the choir was going somewhere—even abroad. Did the school officials think we just pulled spending money off the tree?

S-T-R-E-S-S is a good way to spell college. Our sheltered, supervised academy children were now young adults who were expected to make wise decisions in the midst of those who had lax values. They were exposed to more pregnancies, drugs,

and thefts than we ever thought possible on a Christian campus.

Was this investment really worth the money? You bet it was. Would we do it all over again? We certainly would.

Our children were surrounded by enough Christian teachers, students, and surrogate parents to outweigh the influences of those who were on the margin. They were able to fulfill their mental, physical, and spiritual potential without giving up their religious convictions. They received good, solid educations and are now competing successfully in the real world. They are spirit-filled young people who enjoy life to the fullest. They are well-traveled, thanks to the opportunities offered by our schools. They married Christian spouses and have friends all over the world.

So we praise God for Cedarvale Junior Academy, V. Lindsay Seventh-day Adventist School, Pine Forge Academy, and Oakwood College. We are \$250,000 poorer but certainly richer than we ever dreamed.

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. Isaiah 54:13.

Shirley Fordham is a Montessori public-school teacher and a member of the Linwood Boulevard Seventh-day Adventist Temple in Kansas City, Missouri.



JENNIFER'S TREASURE

By Gary Patterson

CONVENTIONAL wisdom has it that children don't pay attention to what is going on in the "adult world" of worship—especially in a 2,000-seat auditorium of a college church. And even if they did, such an abstruse concept as stewardship would go over the head of the likes of my 6-year-old parishioner, Jennifer, anyway.

But something was getting through to Jennifer's mind. It was the Sabbath just before Thanksgiving. And the week before, I had urged the congregation to make an unusual gift for the standard Thanksgiving offering we took annually to provide for those in need at the Thanksgiving season. "This year," I urged, "in addition to our usual monetary gift for the poor, let's give something of ourselves."

The idea was to bring items that we had made with our own hands, such as home-canned fruit, household items, or even special treasures that had worth beyond mere cash value.

Jennifer's mother had seen me earlier in the week and told me of her daughter's intent to bless some needy child with her gift. So I was somewhat warned what was about to happen—but yet unable to staunch the flood of emotion that resulted.

In contemplation of the gift to be given, Jennifer had reviewed her possessions

O V E R A N D O V E R A G A I N !

and selected her favorite doll to be shared through the medium of this Thanksgiving offering with someone she didn't even know. Carefully wrapping the doll in a fresh blanket, she carried it to church on this her last day with this special and dearly loved treasure.

At the appointed time during the offering—with tears in her eyes—she rose from her pew, brought the precious dolly to the growing mound of gifts, kissed it goodbye, and laid it on the chancel steps as her gift for some needy child.

This was more than I could take. As I watched—tears flowing from my eyes—I wanted to rush to her and give the doll back. I wanted to tell her, “No, Jennifer, you don't have to give up your favorite doll. That's not what I meant.”

But I couldn't. She had made up her mind and to interfere now would be misunderstood, I reasoned. Choking back my own sobbing, I assumed that she would learn a good stewardship lesson from this experience—and I must not interfere.

But then the real truth began to dawn on me—and on the “adult world” of the church. Jennifer was not the one who needed to learn a stewardship lesson. She already understood. But the rest of us needed to learn what stewardship is all about from her simple act of loving service and devotion.

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set [her] in the midst of them, and said, . . . Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:2, 3, adapted.

Gary Patterson is director of the office of mission awareness at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a member of the New Market, Virginia, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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