

Edited by | RONALD ALAN KNOTT

Over & Over Again!

150 Adventists Share

Personal Faith Stories

About Stewardship



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

North American Division

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FOREWORD

THE Scriptures encourage us to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” When we look at other references, we find that special blessings come to those who commit their way unto the Lord, and “carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord . . . , to observe . . . all these commandments.” These blessings take many forms, and our natural inclination is to echo the words that occur several times in the Bible, “O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 118:29).

In the early years of Adventism our churches held frequent “testimony” or “social” meetings, in which members made public statements praising God for specific blessings in their lives. These meetings were well attended and were a source of inspiration. They kept the believers fully conscious that religious faith and belief have relevance to everyday life.

For reasons not yet clear to me, such testimony meetings are not nearly so common now. But, praise the Lord, in *Over and Over Again!* we are treated to a whole book of inspiring testimonies from members today in all walks of life who are eager to share what the Lord has done for them. Each one of these testimonies addresses in some way our great calling to be good stewards of God’s blessings.

We know from Revelation 12 that near the end of time the great controversy—the war between good and evil—intensifies. The devil works with deception, discouragement, and doubt. But God’s people will overcome the devil “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” Evidently reciting to others the providences of God must become a vital element in our ability to maintain our faith and confidence in the blessed hope.

God encourages fellowship and sharing, “and so much the more, as . . . [we] see the day approaching.” When we claim God’s many promises and share their fulfillment in our lives, God becomes real to us and others. “God will remember those who have met together and thought upon His name, and He will spare them from the great conflagration. They will be as precious jewels in His sight. . . . It is not a vain thing to serve God. There is a priceless reward for those who devote their life to His service” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 92).

But God can’t wait! His blessings come even now, and they come *over and over again*. And He delights to hear our praise for these mercies *over and over again*.

It is a great privilege for me to recommend for your reading this very special book. It recounts the goodness of God on behalf of 150 of His children who sought to be good stewards of His grace. These stories will make you more willing to recount to others God’s blessings to you. And I know that they will inspire you to greater fulfillment in your own stewardship relationship with your Heavenly Father. As one who is joyfully awaiting the soon return of Jesus and who desires to respond to His blessings with a service and allegiance of love, I commend to your study *Over and Over Again!*

G. Edward Reid
Stewardship Director
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

PREFACE

THE giddy summer romance deepened into the richer and more serious late shades of autumn. Marriage loomed lovely.

But marriage meant money. And my conservative nature shouted that I had far too little of it to handle a wedding and the uncertainties of the job search in another part of the country this marriage would require.

Stewardship principles, taught well in elementary and Sabbath schools, had, by God's grace, taken firm hold, or so I thought. After college, I had methodically increased year by year the percentage of my income I returned to the church in tithes and offerings. I enjoyed a simplicity of life that allowed me cheerfully to contribute nearly a fourth of my income to the church and its causes.

Now, with impending marriage, I applied the same rigorous discipline to my savings account that I did to charitable contributions. Like a squirrel in autumn hoarding acorns in a tree, I hid away out of every paycheck a flat, and bracing, amount in an account I mentally marked "Untouchable." I took a frenzied interest in the growing balance, and a savage delight in the self-denial it artificially required. My savings account became a feverish obsession.

One Friday afternoon, after mailing off a large check to pay an unexpected bill, I stopped at the bank to deposit my paycheck and smugly transfer the usual amount into savings. And there I faced a crisis. If I made my regular savings deposit, I would seriously overdraw my account when I returned my tithe and usual offering the next morning at church.

I winced at the thought of delaying my regular church commitment. But, in the warped priorities of the moment, it was more unthinkable not to stash my usual savings. I had convinced myself that anything less than the full amount meant breaking my inviolable regimen—and failure.

God, I argued, doubtless admired my discipline in responsibly planning for marriage. Certainly He had blessed my efforts so far. And He, of all, could afford to wait until my next paycheck, when I'd quickly and joyfully pay up on my full commitment to Him.

We wrestled there in the bank lobby, God and I. And after several discarded deposit slips, He won. I saw how out of joint I had allowed my life to get. In financial matters, at least, I had become, in the literal meaning of the term, "dis-eased." I was sick. And by yielding, there in that bank lobby, to His insistence that I put Him first, I found instant healing, in a very real sense, of my feverish and silly obsession. I have never suffered from it since. I learned that God not only supplies my need. He takes away my "dis-eased" wants.

And that impending marriage? It never happened. By the time God brought along someone else, He had made sure I had plenty in the bank to get a good start.

The psalmist blurts out in the grand 103rd: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”

That’s my testimony, too.

Testimonies, of course, are what this book is about. It contains 150 personal testimonies from Adventists about what it means to be good stewards of God’s grace.

For the last four years, my professional life—such as it has delightfully been since our daughter was born and I made the fateful decision to work at home—has had a lot to do with personal testimonies. *Over and Over Again!* is the third collection of personal testimonies I have published in those four years. The first two, *College Faith: 150 Adventist Leaders Share Faith Stories From Their College Days* (Pacific Press, 1995) and *More College Faith* (Worthy Books, 1997) collected personal faith stories from leaders and teachers about lessons they learned while they were students in higher education. More than 40,000 copies have been distributed to students and employees in Adventist colleges and academies.

From the start, I have thought of these books as written records of old-fashioned Adventist testimony meetings. These valuable spiritual exercises occur so rarely now in institutional Adventism that I felt called to do my part by hosting a series myself in book form. Thus, *Over and Over Again!* may appropriately be viewed as a series of 15 “meetings” (chapters) of 10 testimonies each. The distinguishing aspect of this book, of course, is that all the testimonies relate in some direct way to the concept of stewardship, as that concept is generally understood by serious Christians.

In its simplest form, a healthy concept of stewardship is based on three essential claims: 1) God owns us, and everything about us—our bodies, our time, our opportunities, our talents, our possessions, our relationships—everything. 2) He entrusts us with the management of all those resources to bring the highest return on His investment—a return that is measured in glory to His name and in blessing to others. 3) As a tangible symbol or model of our acceptance of the first two claims, He has certain specific expectations about the use of our means.

Each of the stories in this book addresses some aspect of these claims. Of course you will find stories about the joys, rewards, and trials of tithing, and of giving offerings. But you will also find scores of stories about witnessing opportunities well used, calls to service answered, the Sabbath honored under difficult circumstances, and the joys of living a simpler life. All these are genuine *stewardship* stories, too.

Few projects in my life have given me half as much joy and fulfillment as the editing of this book. I would wish for anyone engaged in any aspect of Christian publishing to have the satisfaction I have had in doing this good work. I am grateful to my Heavenly Father in trusting me with this task. I pray that my own stewardship of this responsibility has been worthy of that trust.

Of course, this project has not been mine only. It belongs to many others. First, I must thank Kermit Netteburg, Ed Reid, and Monte Sahlin, all of the North American Division, who had the vision for such a collection, the savvy for making it possible, and the courage to trust me with the project.

Second, I must acknowledge the support of many conference presidents and other

administrators who early on volunteered both moral support and financial commitments. Their confidence gave us the needed momentum to move the project forward, and their financial commitments have guaranteed that this book, on its first printing, will be put in the hands of nearly 90,000 church members across North America.

Third, I must thank my loving family who have supported me in these books every step of the way. My darling wife, Esther, originated the idea for these collections of personal testimonies and has been a constant helper, adviser, and patient spouse through it all. Esther's parents, Alice and Ramnarine Ramharacksingh, gave many priceless hours of grandparenting attention to our 3-year-old daughter, Olivia, while I was preoccupied on this project and Esther was engaged in her full-time ministry as a pastor at Pioneer Memorial Church. Alice and Ram ran our household during these times and made sure we got satisfying, regular, and nutritious meals. And Ram logged scores of hours typing stories, managing data, making telephone calls, and sending faxes. His work played a critical role in helping the book achieve a much greater distribution than we originally planned or expected.

Last, and most important, we all owe everything to the writers of this book. They opened their hearts and their schedules to share personal testimonies of faith for the benefit of the larger church family. What richer, greater benefits await that family when each of us fulfills our God-given obligation to do the same.

Ronald Alan Knott
Berrien Springs, Michigan
April 1998

Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. . . . That which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christlike life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 347