Over & Over Again!
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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GROWING up in Massachusetts, I inherited a time-honored and dubious New England work ethic stated simply as follows: “No matter how big the woodpile is, it’s never big enough.” So when I actually installed a woodstove in our home two years ago, I knew I was tempting temptation.

Our corner of Michigan enjoys relatively modest electric rates, so we certainly didn’t need the stove to balance the family budget. We just wanted to enjoy that extra measure of homey comfort only wood heat can provide; and, encouraged by uncomfortable experience, we wanted a backup for our electric-driven geothermal furnace, should the power go out for a day or two in mid-winter. That, supposedly, was all.

We set the furnace thermostat at a generous baseline of 70 degrees and used the woodstove to keep the furnace off. But as I learned the tricks of managing the stove efficiently, I soon realized that the hobby of staying a degree or two ahead of the furnace thermostat was quickly becoming an obsession. No longer were lower electric bills a pleasant side benefit to the cozy comfort of radiant heat. Lower electric bills were becoming a vital requirement for my mental stability. How easily things get out of joint.

And then some Michigan-winter morning as I gazed out the window, gloating over my impressive woodpile, and rejoicing for the silence of a house where the furnace fan wasn’t blowing, the thought occurred to me that I should tithe the woodpile. Initially, I objected, but I was in a mellow, honest mood. Given my recent obsession with the electric bills, I couldn’t deny that the wood had economic value. So I figured the value of wood and the next Sabbath at church I turned in a tithe check for $100. Soon enough, of course, the electric bills got even lower, and, by the grace of God, so did the temperature of my acquisitiveness.

That’s just one of the little ways this book and its forerunner (the first volume of Over and Over Again!) have influenced my life. They have put me on a path of intentionality. That is, they’ve helped me actually think about the mundane matters of everyday life, and put them more clearly in the context of a Heavenly Father who lovingly presides over everything I do. I am a better steward, and, more importantly, I earnestly want to be a better steward.

This new intentionality is like a benevolent virus that, when given half a chance, gloriously infects other aspects of my life. For example, I decided—not for any legalistic reason, but simply as an expression of thanks to God—that I would give the woodstove and myself a break on Sabbaths. And I decided that I’d be more thoughtful about what I asked the people at FedEx and the post office to do for me during Sabbath hours. That is, I refrain from shipping things on
Fridays if, in my heart, I know I would want them to move on Sabbath to meet my business agenda. Whenever my wife and I must stay in a hotel over Sabbath, we leave a double tip and a note for the housekeeper on Sabbath morning. Our typical note reads:

Dear Housekeeper:

We invite you to take a break.

You need not clean or make up our room today. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we believe that God’s word in the Bible calls us to enjoy a blessing of rest from normal work on the seventh-day Sabbath—Saturday. Where possible, as He asks, we try to extend that blessing to others, and are delighted to extend it to you.

God bless you, and Happy Sabbath.

We have found our gesture to be greeted with genuine appreciation, and we can only pray that by God’s leading it may have some influence for good.

The simple stories in these books have also inspired me to be intentional about how I take care of my body, and so I am much more thoughtful about diet, rest, and exercise. And of course these testimonies have encouraged me, yet again, to enlarge still further my understanding of how God can use my means to advance His interests through His church and its various ministries. It’s my earnest desire that these books will do for every reader what they are doing for me.

Of course, I can’t let this go to press without thanking some who have made it possible. Kermit Netteburg, from the North American Division, engineered for the second time the opportunity for me to do this good work. And again, my loving family has contributed enormously. My darling wife Esther has been, in effect, the second editor, gently offering the most helpful counsel, and giving up vacation time and free time for typing, reading, correcting, and more reading and more correcting. Esther’s parents, Alice and Ramnarine Ramharacksingh, ran our household for many days while I was preoccupied on this project and Esther was engaged in her full-time ministry as a pastor at Pioneer Memorial Church. And Ram logged scores of hours himself typing stories, managing data, making telephone calls and sending faxes. Our daughter Olivia, a five-year-old, had the grace and understanding to accept that some fun things to do on a sunny spring afternoon would have to be postponed—as she volunteered—“until the book is done.”

Finally, we all owe a great debt to the writers of these stories. By the grace of God, 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
May 11, 2000
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