

The NINTH MEETING

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

Psalm 66:16

Ofelia A. Pangan

Liz Sunbeam Robert

Gloria Ann DePalma

LeRoy Finck

James Gilley

Larry D. Word

Gary and Don Emelander

Charlene VanVliet

Ronald J. Goss

Sylvia Davidson



THE SABBATH AND SECURITY

By Ofelia A. Pangan

WHEN MY husband resigned from teaching in a small church school in 1984, we decided to go back to Toronto, where we hoped he could find another job. Though he was drawing a small unemployment benefit, just enough to help us survive, our biggest concern was how we could support our three children in college—one at Canadian Union College and two at Pacific Union College.

I had a part-time job at a nursing home, working in the kitchen for an hourly wage. Initially, my fellow workers gladly exchanged hours on Friday nights or Saturdays whenever I was assigned to work those shifts. But when they discovered I was exchanging my shifts because of religion, nobody would accommodate my request. Suddenly they wouldn't tolerate my not working on Saturdays.

As a last recourse, I approached my supervisor and appealed to her to let me keep my Sabbath. I told her I was willing to work the whole Sunday or put in more hours, but my plea fell on deaf ears. She thought I was very foolish: Not only were jobs scarce, but I had just gotten a raise, which she knew I needed to keep three children in college. The only thing I could do was to resign from my job.

Our family doctor learned of our plight and offered me three to four hours each day at her office as a receptionist. Though I wasn't trained as a secretary, in a few days God helped me learn how to use the multifunction telephone, how to bill the patients, how to make patient appointments with specialists, and many other things. I did my best, and the doctor was pleased with my progress in helping at her office.

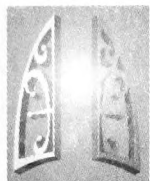
One day I saw an ad in the newspaper, seeking a teacher of English as a second language in a factory where courses were offered before the night shift and after the day shift. I had trained to teach English as a second language, and I began to pray earnestly about the job. Though the position offered only twelve hours of work each week from Monday to Thursday, I was convinced that God was leading me to do that kind of work.

I applied for the teaching job, convinced more than ever that God wanted me to use my expertise in teaching to help us financially and to reach out to others. The Lord helped me get that job, and it paid almost four times as much as the receptionist job and three times the pay of the nursing home. Within a few months, I transferred to a school setting, which helped secure our financial position until my husband found employment again.

If you turn back your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day...; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride

upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 58:13, 14, RSV.

Ofelia A. Pangan is a retired teacher in Clovis, California. She is a member of the Central Valley Fil-Am Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fresno, California.



A PRICELESS THREE-DOLLAR ANSWER

By Liz Sunbeam Robert

WHILE living at the Onondaga Indian Reservation in upstate New York, I gave my heart to the Lord and was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although my little family and I were very poor, I always knew that everything I had was precious and a gift from God. The Native American traditions teach us that the Creator made all things and that we are only stewards of the land and its bounties. But after my baptism I soon learned that God requires us to acknowledge these gifts through our tithe and offerings. Never having tithed before, I was unsure whether I could possibly do this.

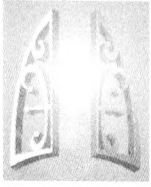
The first time that I resolved to return tithe, I figured out my tithe amount and our bills. I was dismayed to find that I lacked \$3 to meet both needs. That first day—all day—I agonized over what I should do. If I returned tithe, I would likely have my electricity turned off. If I paid my bills, then I would be taking what did not belong to me. I finally decided to ask the Lord what to do. I knelt and prayed, “Lord Jesus, I want to do Your will. I love You, and I trust You to show me what to do.”

I immediately had my answer. I arose from my knees, took God’s money, and put it into an envelope. My heart felt light, and I was no longer worried about how God would supply my needs. I just knew He would.

Shortly after this, I went upstairs to our little Indian library, and in the first book I opened—I couldn’t believe my eyes—were three one-dollar bills tucked away inside! I knelt down right then on that hardwood floor, thanking God for fulfilling His promise to take care of my every need if I returned my tithe faithfully. I’ve seen many blessings ever since that time as I continue to honor God through my tithe and offerings. Thank God for His great love and His faithfulness!

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. Matthew 6:8.

Liz Sunbeam Robert is a retired nurse in Oneida, New York. She is a member of the Oneida Native American Seventh-day Adventist Church.



EXACTLY THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS

By Gloria Ann DePalma

WE NEED a new car. We can't postpone it any longer. I need dependable transportation."

My husband, John, gave me the grim news after arriving home from work late one evening. He had recently joined our conference office as trust services director, a job that required extensive travel to meet the members' needs. Reluctantly I agreed to the purchase because I realized the urgency of our predicament. In leaving a prestigious position in local city government to work for the conference, he had taken a sizeable salary cut. This resulted in family finances that often were tight.

A friend recommended we buy a car from an Adventist Subaru dealer in Pennsylvania, so my husband called and ordered one. When he went to pick it up, the dealer informed him that the new cars had not yet arrived. He would sell John a used one and take it back in trade when he took delivery of the new car. My husband agreed to the arrangement.

One evening John's brother, sensing our financial need, gave him \$500. The next morning, during worship at the office, the publishing director related the experience of a struggling literature evangelist who was facing great financial difficulties. The story tugged at John's heartstrings, prompting him to give \$100 to help the man. After tithing on the \$500 he was left with \$350.

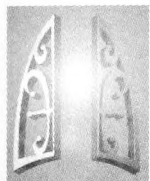
Two months later we began to have problems with the used vehicle. A mechanic told my husband that a protective boot on the front axle was torn and would cost \$350 to repair. We decided to postpone the repairs, but soon the engine began burning oil because of a burnt valve. The same mechanic told us this work would cost an additional \$350. Again we decided to wait on repairs.

We soon received word that our new car had arrived and that we could pick it up. My husband told the dealer about the used vehicle's need for repairs, which now totaled \$700, and asked if we should have the work done or wait for the dealer to do it. The dealer told John to drive the car to Pennsylvania, where he would repair it and charge accordingly.

When my husband arrived at the Subaru dealership to pick up the new car and trade in the used one, he received an estimate on all the repair work for only \$350! This was the exact amount he had left from his brother's \$500 gift after he tithed it and used some of it to help someone else in need.

The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Proverbs 11:25.

Gloria Ann DePalma is a secretary at the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Portland, Maine. She is a member of the James White Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portland.



BLESSINGS BEYOND UNDERSTANDING

By LeRoy Finck

AS EARLY as my days in boarding academy I had often sensed that God was calling me into the ministry. So I started college with that goal in mind. But then the finance department of the college I was attending told me I would have to take out a loan to continue in school. I left college and got a job to save some money for the next year.

Saving began as planned, but a car entered the picture and took a sizeable share of my income. Then a lovely lady became my wife, and a family came along. All of these demanded more and more of my income. Before long there wasn't anything going into savings to continue college, and we were living from one paycheck to another just to meet the bills of sustaining a family.

In the meantime I had convinced myself that the Lord would settle for my working as an active layperson in the local church to keep it running effectively for Him. I tried for years to keep up the facade that I was answering the call to enter the ministry by the many things my wife and I were doing in leadership within the local church. However, every time we had an evangelistic meeting, I felt the strong conviction that the Lord wanted my full attention; He did not want my "leftovers." He wanted all my energy to be focused on ministry instead of just something I did after earning a living for my family.

The Lord allowed me little peace. Whenever I had these impressions from the Lord, my argument was that I never had enough money to reach from one paycheck to the next, so how could I possibly add the expense of tuition and books on top of that? But as my wife and I continued to pray about it, we decided to put God to the test and follow His leading. I soon was experiencing the "peace . . . which passeth understanding."

And what happened in our lives is beyond understanding too. Without any financial help from family or friends, we got me through college, my master of divinity degree, and into full-time ministry in our first church. We did all that without owing anyone anything, and we started with nothing.

My testimony is that when you return to the Lord what He claims as His (not just your means, but your life) and trust Him when He says all of His biddings are accompanied by His enablings, He will bless you beyond human understanding.

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. John 12:26, NKJV.

LeRoy Finck is secretary of the New Jersey Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Trenton, New Jersey. He is a member of the Princeton, New Jersey, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



NOT FORSAKEN

By James Gilley

YOUNG MINISTERS don't make a lot of money, but I wasn't prepared for making less money than I had made as a student. Yet that was the case as we went to pastor our first district after finishing the seminary.

Camille and I were the proud parents of a baby boy. As we sat down at the kitchen table to pay our bills, we wrote the tithe check first. Then we paid the bills. When we finished, we had only \$8 left and a whole month before another check. How would we put gas in the car, buy formula for the baby, or feed ourselves? We had no other income except our salary, and the cupboard was empty.

Of course, we considered holding the tithe check for a week or so. It wasn't our bread we were so worried about, but our baby's, and I was supposed to be the breadwinner of the family. After a heart-searching discussion and a little time of prayer, we decided that by faith we would return the tithe, pay all of the other bills that we owed, and trust God to open the doors. We promptly got into the car and went for a ride, which was very poor economy when we needed to save gas!

Upon returning, we found a car parked in front of our home. It was Howard Lee, the local Worthington Food representative. After we had visited for a few minutes, Howard asked, "Could you folks use some health food?"

"Could we!" Camille and I cried in unison. Then Howard went to his car and brought back some fantastic Worthington Foods (I've had a soft spot for Worthington ever since), including some frozen foods! I knew right then that we wouldn't starve.

Throughout that month little miracles like that happened! Someone left some fresh vegetables on our front porch (we never knew who); a lady in our church who raised hens and sold eggs brought us a couple dozen as a gift; a refund check from a utility company where we had lived in another state arrived when we needed it most! There were always plenty for the baby and plenty for us! And at the end of the month we had \$34 left over, after starting with only \$8.

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

James Gilley is president of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is a member of the Shreveport South Seventh-day Adventist Church.



PRINCIPLES SET IN CEMENT

By Larry D. Word

IN THE summer of 1959 a team of evangelists conducted a crusade in Roanoke, Virginia, in which more than 280 precious souls were baptized. Among them were my mother, father, grandmother, several aunts, uncles, cousins, and three of my brothers. I was very young at the time, but I do remember going to the tent meetings.

Before his baptism my father used to gamble on cardplaying every weekend to make ends meet. His weekly salary was \$55 a week digging ditches. At home were six hungry boys, ages four to fourteen, and one daughter, age two. My father says he never lost while gambling, because he always had a jug of moonshine on the table for his fellow gamblers to drink, which impaired their judgment.

However, after my father joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he and my mother stopped smoking and drinking, and my father immediately stopped gambling. But he still had the problem of not making enough money to feed, house, and clothe his seven children.

As he prayed about the situation, God heard his prayer. My father took up cement masonry. He worked hard at his new trade and learned fast. The harder he worked, the faster he learned his new job.

The two principles he taught his children were to return an honest tithe and liberal offering and to keep the Sabbath holy. Every evening at the dinner table the whole family would gather for family prayer, and my father taught these principles with everyday lessons.

Soon the jobs began to pay more money, and my father always returned an honest tithe and offering. He became so good at his job that he was promoted to supervisor at the place where he worked. Eventually, with some encouragement from his fellow workers, he started his own cement-finishing business.

That's when the blessings really began to flow. We bought our first new car and our first home. My father had two trucks, a car, and all the tools and equipment needed to run his business. He was able to send his last three children to college, and my mother didn't have to work so hard anymore just to make ends meet. He was able to buy his daughters (he had another daughter by now) pretty clothes. Yet he never forsook the church. He gave even more to the church. He became a deacon, and he took care of the grass and maintenance of the church, never charging a dime for his labor.

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

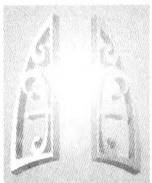
So the Lord blessed the Word family tremendously from the meager \$55 per week. The Lord has blessed all my father's children to reach maturity. One of his sons has a real-estate company, and his properties are worth more than \$2 million. One is a firefighter for the city. Another is a nursing assistant at a Veterans Administration hospital and an elder in the church. Two sons learned the cement business from him. A daughter graduated from Oakwood College, has a master's degree in education, and was voted Teacher of the Year in Florida. The other daughter is in school pursuing a master's degree in physical therapy. The principles my father taught me served me well through a bachelor's degree from Oakwood College and a master's degree from Mercy University. I am also a certified public accountant.

My father's \$55 per week has multiplied to more than \$1 million a year only by the blessings of the Lord, all because he and his family chose to serve God and to be faithful stewards of blessings.

Above all, the Lord has blessed us to have a stable family. Mom and Dad, as of January 13, 2000, had been married for 55 years. "To God be the glory, great things He hath done."

So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 1 Corinthians 3:7, 8.

Larry D. Word is treasurer of the Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in St. Albans, New York. He is a member of the Bethesda Seventh-day Adventist Church in Amityville, New York.



THE LORD MAKES THE HARVEST

By Gary and Don Emelander

IT WAS spring, and the wheat needed to be sprayed. When the contractor got to the last field, he sprayed only part of it. He told us it was so poor that we should plow it up and plant corn or beans instead. That would mean a total crop loss. We decided that it sounded more like an Investment project.

We figured that if we got 40 bushels per acre, we would break even. So we would give everything over 40 bushels an acre to Investment. We didn't even bother to spray the rest of the 65-acre field.

At harvest the field produced an average of 57 bushels per acre (our best field was 59 bushels an acre). That meant the yield was seventeen bushels per acre beyond our break-even point. On 65 acres, that meant 1,105 bushels for God—this from a supposedly worthless crop.

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A few years earlier our wheat harvest was almost done when rains came and caused it to sprout in the field. We took three samples while we loaded the truck. The last 1,200 bushels showed 100-percent sprout. That meant those 1,200 bushels were good only for feed and worth less than half the price.

The standard for acceptance as good wheat is anything less than a sprout rate of 50 percent. We offered half the load to God if it could pass the inspection standard of less than 50 percent sprout, even though our tests already showed 100 percent sprout. Later we felt guilty for giving God half of something worthless, so we gave it all to Him. The next day the results came back showing seven percent sprout, the best load of the season.

God can make anything bad, good.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. Luke 6:38.

Gary and Don Emelander are farmers in Belding, Michigan. They are members of the Ionia, Michigan, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



A PUZZLE FOR THE NIH

By Charlene VanVliet

IN THE summer and fall of 1996 I began to feel ill. A feeling of depression and fatigue grew steadily worse until it was all I could do to drag myself to work, help out at church, or do anything active. We went from doctor to doctor trying to identify the problem. Finally, I believe God led me to a Seventh-day Adventist doctor, who at that time practiced in Chattanooga, Tennessee. After he had examined me and run some tests, he asked if I would allow him to call the National Institutes of Health (NIH) about my case. I consented.

About this time I felt impressed to be a better steward of my health. I began by trying to be in bed no later than nine o'clock each evening so that I would be able to get up early enough to spend time alone with the Lord. I developed the habits of drinking more water, watching my diet more carefully, and exercising regularly.

Soon NIH called and asked if I would allow them to examine me in Bethesda, Maryland. I declined, but after my local doctors soundly scolded me for turning down the opportunity, I finally agreed. In October 1996 I made my first trip to NIH.

As they examined and tested me, they discovered that I had hypogammaglobulinemia. This big word meant, in essence, that I had no immune system. On

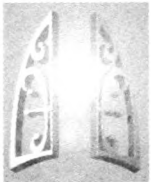
one of my trips I roomed with a young lady with the same ailment. She had been in the hospital seventeen times in four months with different kinds of infections. The specialists at NIH couldn't understand why I wasn't sick all the time with colds or infections, as was every other patient with this disease. I rarely have a cold or infection. They prescribed a gamma globulin infusion every month, and I now feel better than I have in many years.

Not long ago my seventeen-year-old granddaughter, pen and paper in hand, asked me to tell her all my health problems. The list included arthritis, fibromyalgia, osteoporosis, and hypogammaglobulinemia. But in spite of all these problems, I am able now to serve my church as treasurer and hold down a full-time, stress-filled job as administrative director for a large government agency.

I give God all the praise and firmly believe that He has honored my faith in Him and my stewardship of the health He has given me. He has strengthened me to work for Him.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health; just as your soul prospers. 3 John 2, NKJV.

Charlene VanVliet is administrative director of Monroe Housing Authority, in Monroe, Louisiana. She is a member of the Westlakes Seventh-day Adventist Church in West Monroe.



TESTED AND PROVEN FAITHFUL

By Ronald J. Goss

IN 1961 I was honorably discharged from the United States Army. After paying my bar and gambling debts, I had \$22 to my name. I had no job, no car, and no other place to go, so I went home to my mother. I was a prodigal son. I had grown up knowing the truth, and I had attended Adventist elementary schools and academy. Sadly, like many others, I had decided to serve the world.

Faithful and loving Christian that she was, my mother invited me to church on my first Sabbath home. To please her, I went. The sermon was on stewardship. As I listened, I had a strong impression that I must put \$20 into the offering plate before leaving church that day.

"This is crazy," I thought to myself. "Remember, you have only \$22, and no job and no transportation." But the thought kept coming: "'Prove me,' says the Lord."

Before I left the church that day, I put \$20 into the offering plate. On the way home I wondered if I was losing my mind. That evening, while I was unpacking my army-issue travel bag, I came across my address book. Tucked away inside in

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a place long-forgotten, was a twenty-dollar bill. That made quite an impression on me. A short time later the Lord provided me a job with the State of Maryland, where I soon became head of my department.

Even though I didn't rejoin the church until several years later (during which time I got married), God blessed me, just as Malachi 3:10 promises He will. From a trust relationship with God that began in faithful tithing, I grew in grace until I became a faithful and active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

My wife had no use for my renewed faith, and she divorced me. She had a well-paying job. Now, with only half the income, I couldn't make the payments on our small farm.

A tough, frugal man held the mortgage. The only possible way for me to make the payment would be to use tithe money. But I made a firm decision that I wasn't going to borrow on the Lord's tithe.

One day the mortgage holder called me. He said, "I understand you have a birthday coming up soon." I confirmed that it was so. To my utter amazement, the man told me to skip the next month's payment as a birthday gift! Every month after that God saw to it that I could make the payment, often at the last moment. As C. D. Brooks says, "When you're down to your last dime, the Lord steps in just in time."

Throughout the years God has proved to me over and over again that He keeps His word. He gave me a Christian wife, and for many years now we have returned a double tithe to the Lord. He has always taken care of the necessities of life as He promised. He has proved to us that what we couldn't do with 100 percent of our income, He can do with 80 percent. God has a thousand ways of which we know not.

The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Psalm 84:11.

Ronald J. Goss is president of Project Restore in Locust Dale, Virginia. He is a member of the Amicus Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ruckersville, Virginia.



THE POTATO FIELD

By Sylvia Davidson

IT STARTED out as an ordinary fall day, crisp and beautiful. A friend called and asked if I would like to dig potatoes. She explained that a family from church, who operated a large market garden, was going to plow under a field of potatoes because they had no time to harvest them. They gave permission for us to take whatever we wanted before the plow arrived.

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

I couldn't use many potatoes for myself, but my children's families could make use of some. So could my brother. Soon a list formed in my mind.

My friend called the church registry, and families came from all directions to meet at the market garden in Watino. We had a fun time of shared work and comradery, but when the morning was old and all of us had what we wanted, it still appeared that the field of potatoes had barely been touched. What a shame that it should all go to waste! But someone else would have to do the digging. My back was breaking from the unaccustomed hard work.

My little Dakota pickup groaned under a full load of potatoes, so I decided to take the secondary highway home through Girouxville. That's when I heard that still small voice I've come to know as the Holy Spirit. He said, "Take some potatoes to Cathy."

As I passed the street leading to Cathy's house, I grit my teeth, hardened my heart, and pressed the gas pedal. No! Cathy had hurt me by spreading a false story about me, and I would not give her anything. No. Never. So what if she was a single parent of three little ones and was on social assistance; she had wronged me.

Putting that bit of unpleasantness out of my mind, I drove to Peace River, where I found my brother. He was delighted with the huge red and white varieties of potatoes. He invited some of his neighbors to share in the bounty.

Now, with an empty truck, I started home. Then I remembered my list. My son and his family didn't have any of those beautiful potatoes. Neither did my daughter and her family. I would have to make another trip.

Back at Watino, I dug until I thought my lungs would burst from overuse. When the truck was full, I started out for home again on the secondary highway through Girouxville. Once more, when passing that certain street, the Holy Spirit said softly, "Take some potatoes to Cathy."

I was just too exhausted to be firm. "No, please don't make me. I can't do it. She'll make fun of me or throw them back in my face. I just can't."

As this little scene played out in my mind, I felt that somehow I was wrong about something, but I managed to shake it off, and I drove on without stopping.

On the way to Peace River, I decided to bag the potatoes and take them to the Native Friendship Center. A local supermarket gave me some bags, and the center was very appreciative of the gift. As fast as we unloaded the bags, families appeared to take them away. I felt tired but happy for the many people I had been able to help.

It bothered me that the potato field was still only a little more than half cleared, and there was good daylight left. I had to make another trip. I was driven by images of starving people, and I just couldn't let those potatoes go to waste.

Back I went to the potato field, this time too exhausted and sore even to stand. I crawled from hill to hill and dug with my hands, almost crying with fatigue. From the ground I would throw the potatoes into the back of my truck.

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Once again, when passing through Girouxville, the still small voice told me, "Take some potatoes to Cathy."

Broken at last, I said yes and prayed that God would protect me from any verbal onslaught. He did better than that. Cathy wasn't home to say anything at all. But, strangely enough, a large empty laundry basket sat on the step waiting to hold something. Potatoes perhaps?

As I placed each big, beautiful potato in the basket, I realized that my resentment toward Cathy was gone. Only love remained. I forgave her that moment, and I prayed that God would forgive me for my own unforgiving spirit.

Perhaps in heaven God will answer my question: If I had done what the Holy Spirit asked the first time that He asked it, would He have let me give just one load of potatoes instead of three?

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Hebrews 12:11.

Sylvia Davidson lives in Ascot Beach, Alberta. She is a member of the Onoway, Alberta, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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