

The SEVENTH MEETING

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

Psalm 66:16

Myrtle Brown

Linda Basquez

Edward Atwood

M. Kay Cote

Olga Speer

Jere Patzer

Dan Jackson

Jack McNeilus

Jim Ashlock

Gordon Bietz



MOUNTAINS OF BLESSINGS

By Myrtle Brown

ABOUT 30 years ago we had just built the little Columbia, Mississippi, Adventist Church. All we had were four walls, a roof, and one restroom. The local conference was letting us use some folding chairs. We had about 30 members.

I wanted us to have nice pews. I decided to start a pew fund. But what could I do to raise money? I began to think, pray, and wonder.

One day a friend of mine showed me a book with the picture of a quilt in it. She said, "Myrtle, I will give you \$100 to make me a quilt like this."

Well, I made that quilt and fixed me a little box and marked it "Pew Funds." I returned my tithe and put \$90 in the box. This was my secret project.

It seemed that everyone who saw that quilt wanted one. Soon I had orders for 36 quilts, and it took me about three weeks to make one. I really felt I might have taken on more than I could do. But all those people said they would wait as long as it took to get their quilt. So each night I had a long talk with my Father, and He gave me faith to go on.

Pretty soon I had to get a bigger box.

When I thought I had enough money to get the pews, I traveled to north Mississippi and visited a factory that made church furniture. I ordered a pulpit, a communion table and all the pews we needed. Soon we had padded pews that those quilts bought. I had sewed day and night for three years to get those pews.

I give God all the glory, and now I know faith can move mountains.

If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Matthew 17:20.

Myrtle Brown is a retired practical nurse in Columbia, Mississippi. She is a member of the Bass Memorial Academy Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lumberton, Mississippi.



LORD OF THE MAIL

By Linda Basquez

SHORTLY AFTER moving our family from California to Florida, my husband Don had to return to California to care for some property we had rented out. Our renters had quit paying and were now tearing the place apart. With our family living on two coasts, money was tight. Don found a temporary

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job in California, while my adult daughter, Dawn, and three grandchildren moved in with me.

Dawn's monthly paycheck covered the Florida house payment and most of the other bills, but still we looked at it with wonder. How could it ever stretch far enough to cover all the needs? Often I was tempted not to return our tithe, calculating that the extra money might help us through the month. By God's grace I resisted the thought.

Being new to Florida, I knew we needed air conditioning during the summer, but I didn't know how expensive it was. When the first bill came, it was more than \$300. Where was that amount of money ever to come from?

I called my husband in California to see if he could send us the money to pay this whopper of a bill.

"No," he said. "I'm having trouble paying my own bills." And he hadn't been working long enough at his job to get an advance. Time was running out. I called the electric company to see if they would accept partial payment on the bill.

"No," the agent told me, "you need to pay it in full."

With only six days left to pay, my back was against the wall. I even asked the pastor if the church could possibly help. "Your request will have to go to the church board," he said. I waited, hoping for a quick reply, but no answer came. Each night I asked the Lord for help.

With just three days left to pay the bill, I went to the mailbox to see if a letter from Don was there. I needed cheering up. What I found instead was a letter from a California real estate office. They had been collecting rent on a house we owned in Mojave, California, but had misplaced our Florida address. Enclosed with the letter were two six-month-old money orders that totaled \$900.

Who cared about my pride? With tears running down my cheeks, I thanked the Lord right there in the post-office parking lot.

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Matthew 6:31, 32, NIV.

Linda Basquez is a food-service worker for Blountstown High School in Blountstown, Florida. She is a member of the Marianna, Florida, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



BLESSED ASSURANCE

By Edward Atwood

MY WIFE Marice works in a home for special care. One day she received an unusual request from Marjorie, a member of our church. At 91 years

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old and twice widowed she asked, "Would you be willing to take me into your home and care for me in the time I have left?" When she said "home," she didn't mean the place where my wife worked. She didn't want to be put in a home for the aged. She wanted to live in a real home with a real family. She had chosen ours.

Marice and I thought of many reasons why we would not be able to accommodate Marjorie's request. Our house just wasn't big enough. Our plans to build an addition had never materialized, and with six in the family, our house was constantly the center of bustling, high-density activity.

We talked and prayed about the situation. Did God want us to take this aged child of His into our home? We believed He did. Marjorie was overjoyed when we finally invited her to be part of our home. We moved one of our sons into the cluttered basement by a noisy furnace and gave his room to her.

Marjorie went to church almost every week, but as time passed, she became more frail and could no longer attend. However, she was still able to manage alone for several hours while the family went to church.

She would often ask to talk with me about some Bible text that was unclear to her. I was troubled when, on one occasion, she confided that she did not have the assurance of salvation. My study time with her seemed to be of little help. We continued to ask God to bless her. I did not realize to what lengths the Lord would go to answer our prayers and care for His frail child.

One Sabbath afternoon as we arrived home from church, I heard voices inside as I approached the door. Our collie dog would never let anyone near Marjorie unless we were home. I entered the house just in time to hear the ending of beautiful voices in song. Marice and I expected to find people there, and we were surprised to see that no one was in the house except Marjorie. "Who has been singing to me all this time?" she asked. "It was the most beautiful music I've ever heard."

As I think back on that day when God sent a delegation from heaven to our home for such a purpose, I feel honored. Marjorie spent her last two and a half years with us, and I am happy to report that somewhere in that time she gained the assurance of salvation.

We did build an addition to the house, and although it wasn't completed in time for Marjorie to enjoy, we were able to provide a home for my elderly parents. My father passed away here at home in 1997. My mother is still with us.

Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you. Isaiah 46:4, NKJV.

Edward Atwood is a sawmill owner and operator in Oak Park, Nova Scotia. He is a member of the Oak Park Seventh-day Adventist Church.



THE BLESSINGS OF FAITHFULNESS

By M. Kay Cote

I DON'T REMEMBER a time during my working years when I didn't return tithe to the Lord, along with some offerings. There were times when it wasn't easy. For years I didn't recognize all the principles of stewardship, and I married out of the church, not taking into account God's counsel not to be "unequally yoked." This sometimes caused difficulties.

In the early 1970s I returned to work because I wanted my daughters to receive a Christian education. When it came time for the eldest to attend academy, a representative from the school visited my husband and me. We talked about finances. My husband isn't a Christian, and he wanted our children to attend the local public school. I was determined that our daughter attend the academy, so he agreed to send \$50 a month for her education. Later he withdrew the offer, which meant that the total responsibility for our daughter's school bills fell on me.

The Lord is good. I faithfully returned His tithe on my salary, and He provided the money needed. The school gave her help from the needy-student fund, and she worked on campus in different jobs to help with her tuition.

At camp meeting one summer, while our daughter was still in academy, the conference began promoting the 10+10 plan. We were encouraged to give another full ten percent in offering above tithe. I was impressed that this was something I needed to do, and frankly, I wanted to see how God would work. As soon as my next paycheck arrived, I instituted the new giving plan, and my daughter graduated, diploma in hand, with all her bills paid!

For the next two years she attended Walla Walla College, and she received her associate degree in early childhood education. Then she went on a Task Force assignment to Arizona for a year. She enjoyed teaching so much that she decided to go on for a full teaching degree. She returned to Walla Walla, and again graduated with her school bills all paid, except for a couple of small student loans that she was able to repay shortly. God never failed us.

Faithfulness in returning tithe and offerings from my salary has blessed our entire family. We are retired now, and daily we have evidence of His care in providing money to live on through some savings and retirement income. We are never short of funds to cover expenses and to help others, including our church, locally and worldwide.

I praise God for His goodness and care for us over the years. One of the best rewards is the change I see in my husband's attitude toward God.

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For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 1 Corinthians 7:14.

M. Kay Cote is a homemaker and retired secretary in Dillon, Montana. She is a member of the Dillon Seventh-day Adventist Church.



OPENING DAY

By Olga Speer

WHEN my late husband and I got acquainted, he operated a seasonal business, which was open seven days a week during the summer and closed during the winter months.

During the winter that Ralph and I got acquainted, he started to keep the Sabbath and to return tithe. When summer came, he decided to keep the business closed on Sabbath. His father said, "There is more business on Saturday than on any other day of the week. If you close on Saturday, you will starve."

Ralph kept his business closed on the Sabbath that normally would have been the opening day of the season. He held his opening day the next day—on Sunday. He had more business on that one day than in any entire *week* before, when the business was open seven days a week.

Ralph and I were married a short time after this. We always found that God blesses those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. Psalm 25:12, 13, NASB.

Olga Speer is a retired Bible instructor in Ardmore, Oklahoma. She is a member of the Summit Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church in Harrah, Oklahoma.



A COMMENTARY ON ASSURANCE

By Jere Patzer

MY WIFE and I were newlyweds at Andrews University in Michigan, where I attended graduate school. Each month we had just enough money to return our tithe, give a little offering, and pay our bills.

Once a year various publishers came on campus with a special one-week book

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sale just for students. As I browsed through the sale, my eye caught a set of Bible commentaries. The more I thought about that set, the more I wanted it. Certainly those books would be a practical addition to a would-be minister's library. But the price, though significantly reduced, was still \$63. That's not much in today's economy, but it was a lot to a young seminarian at that time. I decided to make it a matter of prayer.

At that time in my life I needed some special assurance that God was with me and that I was doing His will. I decided to give God the opportunity to show me His presence in some meaningful way, such as getting that set of Bible commentaries.

A few evenings later the phone in our campus apartment rang. "Hey, Jere," the caller said, "I just realized I still owe you some money for that painting you did for me last summer. I'll put a check in the mail."

"Okay, God, it's looking better," I prayed. "But I need to get at least \$63, and it has to be here before the sale ends on Friday." More prayer, anticipation, and then some doubts. The man hadn't paid me for weeks. What would make me think he'd rush a check off to me in time? Furthermore, I didn't even know how much he owed me. More prayer. "Please, God, this is not a life-or-death situation, but . . . it certainly would strengthen my faith."

I went to the mailbox on Friday, the last day of that book sale. Yes, there was an envelope from the paint contractor. I took it back to the apartment. One more prayer. Now my hands were almost shaking with anticipation as I opened the envelope. There was the check, and it was for \$70. Wow! Praise the Lord. The \$70 minus \$7 for tithe left \$63—the exact amount I needed.

Still praising the Lord, I rushed off to get my books. And then came a worry. What about Michigan sales tax? I got to the sale before closing, grabbed my set of commentaries, and asked the cashier, "What's the total with tax?"

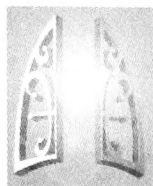
"Oh," she replied, "There is no tax, because this is an out-of-state sale."

I was one excited seminarian that Sabbath. And today, as I write this testimony, I can look over at my shelves and see the books that God gave a young seminary student just to increase his faith.

Does God always respond to me like that? Of course not. In fact, that may be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But it was enough to give me confidence today, so many years later, that God does care about us.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him. Matthew 7:11.

Jere Patzer is president of the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Portland, Oregon. He is a member of the Hood View Seventh-day Adventist Church in Boring, Oregon.



OUR WAYS, HIS WAYS

Dan Jackson

IN DECEMBER 1980 I was invited by the General Conference to serve as a pastor and district leader in Colombo, Sri Lanka. After agonizing over the decision, our little family, so happily situated in the beautiful Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, decided that no place in the world is better than the place where God wants us to be. For us, Colombo, Sri Lanka, was that place. Our experience over the next five years in Sri Lanka and India provided us with great blessings and taught us many needed spiritual lessons. However, one of the greatest lessons came in the area of stewardship.

After we accepted the call, the basic pre-move arrangements needed to be made. Among many other things, we needed to sell our house. We had owned it for only eleven months. By the grace of God we sold it the same day we put it on the market, and we made a very handsome profit. After returning our tithe, we were able to pay off all of our debts. Even then, we still had \$20,000 to invest. We decided to purchase a piece of property that we believed would appreciate in value. We planned to use the proceeds from the sale of that land to provide for our children's academy and college education when we returned from Sri Lanka. This seemed like a great idea. We left the matter in the Lord's hands and moved to southern Asia.

Five years later we returned to Canada. We enrolled our children in church school and academy and, according to our plan, we put our land up for sale. Within two years we had two children in two different academies. Monthly tuition costs were far greater than we could afford. And the land did not sell.

Because we had trustingly placed the matter of our children's education in God's hands, we determined to leave the matter right there.

Over the next several years we saw the intervention of God time and time again. On one occasion my conference president told me that an individual had given him a donation to be applied to my eldest daughter's school bill. Another time we discovered we qualified for a benefit that we had not expected, so our youngest daughter was enabled to attend Upper Columbia Academy. While we were often challenged, the Lord provided all our immediate needs, and our children finished their education in our schools.

Sometime after our youngest child had finished academy, we finally sold that land. As it turned out, our investment had been a very poor one. We received only \$7,000 from the sale. We used it to pay off a few debts, but by that time, praise the Lord, none of it was needed for school bills.

Our heavenly Father, who knows the end from beginning, provided for the

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Christian education of our children without having to rely on our plans. Our well-intentioned ways are not necessarily His ways. We learned the lesson of trust.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my way, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8, 9.

Dan Jackson is president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He is a member of the Saskatoon Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



MONEY BACK—OR AHEAD?

By Jack McNeilus

AS A businessman who believes in Bible principles of stewardship, I've been used to returning what I thought was a faithful tithe. Each year, after the accounting is done, I've corrected the amount of tithe that I had contributed and was happy in the thought that I was faithful.

But a sermon by our pastor changed my thinking. In essence, the pastor described a money-back offer: If we had returned our tithe in faith and found that we couldn't do without that tithe money in our budget, he would see to it that we got it back after a period of time. That offer really got me thinking.

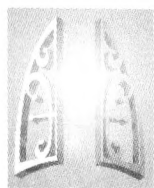
Was I really living on faith, trusting my needs to God, or was I just returning a dividend on what God had given me? That month I decided to find out.

I decided to return my anticipated next year's tithe for the whole year in advance and see what God would choose for my income. I added a fourteen percent increase over the previous year's tithe and put the check in the tithe envelope. In April I changed my business from a sole proprietor to a corporation and started receiving a monthly salary. On this income I returned tithe also.

A year went by; my business gross sales for that year were up fourteen percent, and so was my faith. My warehouse is now full to overflowing.

But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Luke 12:31.

Jack McNeilus is the owner of Baraboo Steel in Baraboo, Wisconsin. He is a member of the Baraboo Seventh-day Adventist Church.



ONLY A DREAM

By Jim Ashblock

I GREW up in an Adventist home and generally tried to follow the basic beliefs of the church. There were times when I was doing many things I knew were not right, and during those times I'd try to convince myself that my life was nobody else's business—not even God's. During these low periods in my relationship with the Lord, when I really wasn't even trying, I would stay up late at night so that I would fall asleep quickly and not have to think when the lights were out. I didn't want to think about where I knew I was going to end up.

On one of these nights, when I fell into bed exhausted, I had a memorable dream. It was in "living color," and it's as clear to my memory now as it was to my dreaming consciousness on that night more than twenty years ago.

I saw the second coming of Christ, portrayed exactly like some of the paintings in Adventist publications. Men, women, and children of every race were standing in their graves looking up to Christ. They had crowns on their heads, and some of the older ones had many stars in their crowns.

Suddenly someone I knew appeared and said, "Well, Jim, I see that you not only didn't make it but that you also kept a number of others from making it."

What could he mean? Then I realized I was wearing a crown, but when I took it off, I saw that it was a black crown with a number of stars in it. But the stars represented people who would *not* be in heaven *because of me*. While I was looking at my crown, the stars turned into faces that I recognized from my past—people who were lost forever because of me.

I woke from my dream in a cold sweat. I got down on my knees and asked God to forgive me. For the first time in my life I surrendered completely to Him. I realized forcefully that my life is not my own; it's His. I have a responsibility, not only for myself but for others whose prospect for eternal life I may help or hinder.

In the years since, with the Lord's help, I've done everything I can to undo the wrongs of my past. In many cases those concerned are no longer living. But since Jesus is the Lord of my life, I gladly put all my trust in Him. He knows my heart.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. . . . Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You. Psalm 51:10, 13, NKJV.

Jim Ashblock is a retired educational administrator in Collegedale, Tennessee. He is a member of the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church.



SPIRITUAL DOING AND SPIRITUAL BEING

By Gordon Bietz

IN ONE OF my favorite cartoon strips the first panel shows Garfield the cat standing in the shadows on one side of bright sunlight that is beaming through the window. He contemplates the warmth of the sunlight. The balloon above his head contains the words, “I wonder if I can get across this time.”

The second panel shows Garfield making a tremendous leap, trying to get through the warmth of the light to the other side. The final panel shows him collapsed in a heap in the midst of the warm sunbeam. He had fallen totally asleep in the warmth and comfort of the sun.

That cartoon is a picture of my journey into my office each morning.

On the far side of my office is a chair where I am committed to having my personal devotions. My Bible is there. But on the way to that chair I must pass the irresistible draw of my desk and computer. The desk is piled high with work, and the computer beckons with the siren song of e-mail. It is as if there is a black hole that irresistibly draws me. From pastor, to conference president, to university president, the ongoing nemesis of my life is my activist personality—the desire to do things and please people instead of taking time to be with God.

I have stood when calls were made to spend one hour a day in prayer. I have stood when appeals were made to spend fifteen minutes a day in Bible study and prayer. I have made appeals to others at the close of sermons and then had to live with the guilt of personal lack of performance.

With Paul I say, “For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” (Romans 7:18, NIV.) I have rationalized my weakness, but my human nature goads me to please man, not God. When I answer mail, write letters, organize events, and send thank-you notes, I receive many rewards. The rewards of spending quiet time with God are not as immediate; God doesn’t send me thank-you notes.

Unfortunately, I am prone to measure my worth by the things I do rather than the person I am. I would rather do a spiritual task than be a spiritual person, not realizing that I can do nothing spiritual until I am spiritual. I have come to the realization that, for me, I must not wait until the day is in gear before my spiritual life is in gear. Rather, I must take time for my highest priorities before I get there. So now, before I get to the office, I have a time of exercise and prayer. I may not finish as many tasks, but no one seems to miss my doing what I thought was so crucial.

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

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10.

Gordon Bietz is president of Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. He is a member of the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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