
People who have found true happiness

By J. ROGER McQUISTAN

The story of how an insurance salesman found "more to life."

It was in a small Midwestern town on a hot, mid-July morning that I found true happiness.

On that day I drove to my office, situated on the second floor of the local bank, and as I parked my car, I thought, There must be something more to life than this. I crossed the street, climbed the stairs, and entered my office. As I walked across the floor to my desk and sat down, I was still pondering this idea, which had never before entered my mind.

Up to this point in time, life had been a whirl of activity. When I was barely 17 I graduated from high school. I completed a year of college and then joined the Army. After two years of military duty I returned to college, obtained a degree in business education, and became a sales representative for a major life insurance company.

In many ways life was good. My high school sweetheart and I had married two weeks before I shipped out for Korea. We now had two beautiful daughters. We had good health, business was thriving, and we were involved with family and friends. However, something seemed to be missing.

I had been raised in a Christian home and had attended Sunday school and church from early childhood. I had been taught the Ten Commandments and how to pray; but as I grew older I drifted from the church and its teachings and had stopped attending services by the age of 18. Yet my conscience was still tender, and at times I would attempt to reform my life, only to discover that my resolutions were powerless and my promises like ropes of sand. With each attempt at self-reformation and the subsequent defeat, my self-worth ebbed a little more.

I sought to compensate for this loss by joining organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Masonic Lodge, and Toastmasters International. I also took pride in achievements, such as being a part of a championship basketball team, winning a letter in college track, and excelling in life insurance sales.

With this complex mix of restlessness, emptiness, guilt, defeat, and human pride, my life was becoming more and more frustrating. Now, at the age of 24 I found myself using alcohol in an increasing amount to make life tolerable, and gradually I was becoming estranged from my wife and family.

Such were my circumstances on the day that I first thought, There must be something more to life than this. As I sat at my desk my attention somehow was drawn to the bottom, left-hand drawer in which I had kept a black object

ever since I had set up business. I opened the drawer, took the Book from its resting place, laid it in front of me, and sat there staring at it. The old black Bible had been given to me some ten years before as an eighth-grade graduation gift from a favorite aunt who had a genuine interest in my spiritual well-being. She had had my name stamped in gold letters on its cover, and consequently I kept it with me everywhere I went, not because of what was in it but because of what was on it.

I picked up the Book, opened its pages at random, and began to read a passage in the Old Testament. As I read, something began to take place in my life. First of all, I sensed the presence of God, that He was alive, and that He could help me. Also I became painfully aware that I needed to change my way of life, which was very much out of sync with God's will.

As I read, these convictions became stronger and stronger. Finally, I came to the critical point where I had to make a decision. Would I continue in the frustration and unhappiness that now plagued my life, or would I surrender to God and His will? The struggle was intense! It was obvious that such a change would affect my relationship with friends and business associates. It would alter my social life. It would require me to give up activities that brought pleasures while they lasted but in the end left me melancholy and sad. Finally, the scale tipped and I made a silent resolve to do what I knew was right. Rather than looking to self, I would accept the help that I knew God would give me if I would let Him.

God became a part of my life

With that resolve, something wonderful happened! A sense of tranquillity and peace that I had never experienced before came over me! I could not for the life of me figure out what was happening. Having taken psychology classes in college, I tried to rationalize what was taking place, not knowing that in reality I was experiencing what Christians call being born again.

That evening as I walked out of my office I was a different person than when I walked in—maybe not so much in action but certainly in attitude. The whole world looked different! In fact, as I drove to a late evening appointment, the sun was setting, and for the first time in my life I was thrilled with the beauty of God's creation. From that day on I felt a part of creation, that I was no longer a stranger to my environment or to God, but that I belonged to Him and to the world around me.

God was now a part of my life. I felt His presence everywhere I went. The loneliness, the emptiness, was gone. I found myself talking to Him as I would to a friend, and through this openness to His leading, to my sheer delight, habits I had been struggling to change were broken with minimal effort. A new spiritual power was flowing into my

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life. Within weeks I stopped using alcoholic beverages. I started coming home at night after work rather than going to the club. My wife, Gloria, and I began a honeymoon experience that grows richer with each passing year. My speech became pure, my relationships with people more genuine and sincere. My business doubled in one year simply because I now saw my occupation as an avenue of service rather than merely a means of making money. The Bible began to have a great attraction for me. Its message of love and hope, of sound practical instruction and encouragement, spoke to my inner needs.

Significant step to spiritual growth

A significant step in spiritual growth took place in a small 30-bed hospital one day in June, as I was waiting for the birth of our third daughter, Velvet. After getting my wife settled, I went into the waiting room to find something to read. A book in an old bookcase caught my eye. I took it down and began to read. I soon discovered that this was no ordinary book, but one of great inspiration and power, dealing with the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Its fast-moving account of early church history held me captive. As I raced from chapter to chapter my soul thrilled with the stories of the great and noble people who had championed the cause of truth down through the centuries. As I continued to read, I discovered that the day of rest and worship given in the fourth commandment and observed by Jesus Himself was not Sunday, but Saturday! This was a startling revelation!

My wife, two daughters, and I had started attending church regularly. Sunday was a day we would spend together as a family, a day of rest and relaxation. It was a day that held a certain amount of sacredness. To be confronted with overpowering evidence that the Bible day of worship is Saturday, the seventh day of the week, not Sunday, was a bit disconcerting. I turned to the front of the book to see what church published it. I discovered, however, that there was no church named. I put the book back on the shelf.

One day my wife called me at the office and asked if I could come home. There was someone at the house she wanted me to meet. I drove the few blocks home, parked the car, and walked into the house. Sitting on the couch was a neatly dressed young man and on the floor a beautiful spread of Bible story books. One book immediately caught my eye. It was the same book I had read a year before in the hospital waiting room. Since that day I had been reading almost everything I could find on the subject of Christianity. I was discovering that churches hold many different views on major doctrines such as Communion and baptism. With my family I visited different churches, trying to decide which one, if any, taught and practiced the principles of the Bible. Frankly, the wide differences of opinion were quite confusing, and I had been earnestly praying for God's guidance. My newfound friend and I began talking about the great realities of the Christian life. To my barrage of questions he gave logical, Biblical answers. I was especially interested in the second coming of Jesus. Much to my delight, I was introduced to a system of Bible study that clearly traced the fulfillment of prophecy in the events of secular and church history.

For more than nine hours, my wife and I sat spellbound as

we explored new teachings such as acceptance with God through faith in Christ, the mark of the beast, the seal of God, what happens after death, where is heaven, and what is hell. We had never before heard anything as exciting as this! The time flew by and finally, at 1:30 A.M., our friend got up to leave. As he did so, he warmly invited us to attend church with him the next Saturday morning. The nearest SDA church, I feared, was some distance away.

When we arrived at the church on Saturday morning I was startled to discover that it was a small building tucked in between two houses in an older neighborhood of the city. It contrasted sharply with the large church we had been attending. However, it took us only a short time to discover the uniqueness of the people who worshipped there. The small congregation greeted us with warmth and openness and took my two daughters down a flight of stairs to the children's Sabbath school. As I saw the little picket fence with flowers, pictures of Jesus and animals, and birds hanging from the ceiling, I knew that here was a people who loved children and invested time and money in their spiritual well-being.

My family and I began driving the 60-mile round trip every Sabbath morning to worship. We continued to study each week. Great and wonderful lessons of God's love and mercy unfolded before us. Finally we were convinced that here was a church that based its faith on the solid foundation of Holy Scripture. The people were wholesome, positive, and committed.

On a beautiful Sabbath morning in late summer my wife and I were baptized into Christ by immersion and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As I now look back 20 years I can say without the slightest reservation that this was one of the wisest decisions we ever made.

Soon I was invited to become a part of the church's literature ministry. I resigned from the life-insurance business and entered into a new venture of full-time Christian service.

Having a desire to enter the pastoral ministry, I accepted an opportunity to continue my education in theology. Later I was ordained to the gospel ministry.

The spiritual rewards of serving Christ have been overwhelming. I have found great satisfaction ministering to people's spiritual needs. By following practical health principles, such as eating a vegetarian diet and abstaining from drugs and stimulants, our family has enjoyed excellent health.

The promise of prosperity, given to those who are faithful in tithes and offerings, also has been fulfilled to us. Our children have had the opportunity to form Christian characters and wholesome friendships through a Christian education.

We have found a circle of friends in the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that has been a source of encouragement and strength. Our happiness has been more than we ever thought possible. We have found a source of personal peace and joy that increases with each passing day. Our lives have been enriched beyond measure. We have tasted and found that the Lord is good. We have realized the truthfulness of His word, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). □