

December 2019



Dear AWR Friend,

A few days ago, I was standing on a precipice high on the ledge of a hill in Nazareth, at the very spot where a mob tried to throw Jesus off the cliff before He miraculously walked away unseen.

From my vantage point I could see the valley of Megiddo all the way up to Mount Carmel. As I looked at that famous mountain, my thoughts went back to Elijah and what he said to the people of Israel on that memorable day: “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” (1 Kings 18:21)

For three and a half years, there had been no rain. Elijah had proposed a standoff between Baal’s prophets and God and His prophet. The altars were prepared, and all day long the 450 prophets of Baal cried out, shouted, danced and cut themselves as they begged their god to consume the offering. All to no avail.

Then Elijah, after instructing that much water be poured over his altar, offered up a simple prayer—and God sent fire! So much fire, in fact, that it consumed the rocks nearby.

What a fantastic God! What a powerful and direct answer to prayer! We know that as we near the end of time, we will all be called to stand for truth like Elijah—to face an impossible moment when our faith will be tried—and come out victorious.

Let me share an experience that one of our young missionaries from our AWR Center for Digital Evangelism recently recounted. It shows that God is always up to the challenge, even when we face extreme circumstances.

A BOWL OF STEAMING RICE

Rhea had just graduated with a degree in special education. She wanted to work as a missionary—teaching in the Philippines where she lives—so she prayed about it, not sure where to go. One night she had a dream. She was standing high on a hill, talking to the Tobalot people, a primitive tribe from the mountains. And in the sky, she could see written the name of an Adventist literacy agency.

When she awoke, she knew where she had to go. She contacted the agency, and it just so happened they had an opening with the Tobalot tribe. This was actually not surprising, as the area is considered one of the most primitive and inhospitable places to work. She knew of other missionaries who had lost their lives in that very place.



Rhea's parents were concerned. She would need to travel for 16 hours over bad roads, then hike up a steep mountain for six hours lugging a heavy pack. Modern conveniences and even basic safety could not be taken for granted. She would be living in a bamboo hut with a thatched roof, cut off from the outside world without electricity, internet or cell phone service. The area was known for poisonous snakes, and the Tobalot practiced black magic.

But once Rhea made her decision, miracles began to happen. Her parents, so afraid for her safety, had a dream. They told her, "We are worried, but God has given us the same dream He gave you, so we know He is calling you."

Then Rhea's father, who until then had never made a decision to be baptized, said, "Rhea, I know you have prayed for me for years. Can you please arrange for someone to give me Bible studies? I want to be baptized before you leave."

As the day of her departure grew near, many people tried to discourage her: "It's not safe! No one wants to go there! You need to reconsider!" But Rhea and Janine, a young girl the agency had paired her up with, set out on their journey.

For three days they traveled, finally arriving at the base of the mountain they would climb on foot. After six long hours of climbing, they arrived hot and tired to what would be their village. Some of the villagers welcomed them gladly, but many people were suspicious and looked unhappy to see them. The chief was definitely hostile, and Rhea and Janine could not communicate properly in the local dialect.

Finally, the chief called everyone to sit in a circle. There were speeches and ceremonies, and it all seemed very strange to the young girls. Then, an empty bamboo bowl was brought and put in the middle of the group. Branches and leaves were placed over the bowl, and then a strange dance began to take place around it. The dance seemed to go on forever until finally, with much ceremony, the branches and leaves were removed—and the previously empty bowl was now full of hot, steaming rice!

Rhea and Janine were alarmed. What could be the meaning of this? How could hot cooked rice get in the bowl? No one had touched it. In that moment, they realized they were looking at black magic. This was the devil's work, and they were in enemy territory.

Both girls were afraid. Now the chief was looking sternly at them, indicating that they must do the same. Taking another empty bowl, he put it in front of the girls and ordered them to cover it with branches and leaves, demanding they pray to their God.

There was a defiance in the chief's eyes, and the girls understood that if they were to remain, they must do the same. It would not go well for them if they failed. Would the chief kill them? They didn't know, but they didn't feel safe. They understood that this was a Mount Carmel moment.



Would the Lord answer Rhea's prayer for a steaming bowl of rice?

They looked at each other. Rhea didn't doubt God's power, but would He do it for them? Was it presumptuous to demand a miracle? What type of prayer should they offer? All these thoughts raced through Rhea's mind as she and Janine silently gathered the leaves and branches under the watchful eye of the villagers. They placed the bowl in the center of the circle, then each girl said a simple prayer, entrusting their lives to God and asking Him to show His power which was being so blatantly challenged. They asked God to perform a miracle, and if it was His will, to fill the bowl with hot rice so that the people would believe in Him.

They finished their prayer so quickly that the chief was surprised. He had expected dancing, or at least chanting, but certainly not this. He had a smug look on his face when he confidently removed the leaves and branches that covered the bowl, but his smug look turned to shock—because the bowl was full of hot, steaming rice!

Now it was the villagers' turn to stare in amazement. This had never happened before with outsiders! Anyone who dared visit their village always failed!

Rhea and Janine were also in awe of what God had done. Yes, they were in the devil's territory, but in that moment they understood that God's power is stronger, and they vowed to make this His territory!

The girls were shown to where they could stay, and it was as bad as they had imagined, but God blessed their efforts in that village. They started a small Christian school and taught the children simple English, math, reading and writing—but above all, they taught the villagers about the love of God. Rhea also worked with a group of deaf children—teaching them sign language.

She remained with the Tobalot tribe for two years and saw many more miracles. On one occasion, a group of villagers came to ask her to pray for rain. It rains often in the mountains, but there was a severe drought and the crops were drying up. Rhea offered up a simple prayer, asking God to make it rain for the sake of the crops, but more importantly, so that the people would understand that God cared for them. She had no more than said “Amen” than it began to rain, much to the amazement and delight of the villagers.

“It was a difficult experience,” Rhea said. “My faith was tested repeatedly, and it grew by leaps and bounds. But in the end, I was the most blessed of all.”

God was preparing Rhea for greater service. When her term of service was over and she came down from the mountain, she stopped to visit her friend who happens to work with **Adventist World Radio** in our **Center for Digital Evangelism**. Rhea felt that God was calling her to work with AWR—and it was a perfect fit!

Today Rhea handles the video calls from deaf people who call with Bible questions. She is able to use her sign language skills to communicate and pray with them. But we're excited about a special project she's working on: she will be filming the *Revelation of Hope* evangelistic sermons in sign language with her friend, Van Nezza, so other precious deaf people can learn about Jesus!



Rhea (pictured at right) is now working with her friend, Van Nezza, to prepare an evangelistic series in sign language.



Isn't God amazing? When He calls us, He enables us to fulfill the challenge!

We know that as we near the end of earth's history, we will all be called to an Elijah moment—a Mount Carmel experience where we will all be challenged to take a stand for Jesus.

As we focus on the spirit of giving this time of year, it is good to remember the One who took a stand for us. Jesus gave up everything—the comforts of heaven, and even His own life—so that you and I could be saved. If that isn't good news, I don't know what is!

As we share in the joy of giving, please remember the work of AWR in a special way this month. We have many exciting challenges this coming year—including our Center for Digital Evangelism and Rhea's special project.

This is also a time to say a big "thank you!" for your continued support of Adventist World Radio. We could not do what we do without you. Each one of us has a part to play as together we let God's light shine in the darkness.

May the light of the Costliest Gift shine in your heart and home this holiday season.

Yours in the Blessed Hope,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duane McKey".

Duane McKey
President



P.S. What an amazing miracle! And this is just the beginning of what God has promised He will do for you and me as we carry the precious message to the farthest corners of the world. Thank you for supporting the work of AWR in such a marked way this past year, and for your continued partnership in 2020. Jesus is coming soon! Maranatha!