

December 2023

Dear AWR Friend,

I was five years old, and it was the week before Christmas at my parents' dairy farm in Oklahoma. We still didn't have a Christmas tree, and I was a bit concerned. Mother had the cows to tend, plus the housework, and Dad was working in the oil field that winter, so I knew they were busy. I decided it was time to take action.

The day was bitterly cold with the snow blowing around, so I put on my coat and jacket and got a small hatchet my dad kept in the barn. Then I got our little red wagon and pulled it across the road to what had once been my grandparents' farm, where I knew there was a cluster of small cedar trees.

I chose a nice tree and began to work on it with the hatchet. It was hard work, and it was cold, but I kept at it until the tree came loose. Then I rolled it over and got it into the wagon and started for home.

I was so excited that I'd gotten the Christmas tree for our family!

Mother was out looking for me and saw me coming with the wagon and the tree in tow. She looked surprised, but smiled and helped me get the tree inside. I never forgot that moment and how happy and proud I felt to have contributed in some way to the family.

That's how it is with God's family. We rejoice when we can work together with heaven in the salvation of others: "The earthly family is to connect with the heavenly family in binding up wounds and bruises that sin has made . . . with what joy heaven looks upon these blended influences!" (*Testimonies* 6, page 457)

That's what Christmas is all about! A Savior was given to the human race, to restore us to the heavenly family. There is no greater news than this—and no greater joy than sharing it with others!

On that note, let me share something amazing that happened just a few days ago. In October, I mentioned how whole churches have been hearing the Adventist message and joining the faith, and how this is happening not only in far-off countries, but right here in America. Let me share the latest story.

THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN CHICAGO

A few weeks ago, a pastor from a Pentecostal church in Chicago stumbled upon one of Adventist World Radio's videos on YouTube. It was the story of Wisam Ali, who had once been a devout Muslim, and was now an Adventist pastor and director of AWR's radio station in Nazareth. If you follow our videos and newsletters, you've probably watched his story and read the many updates on Wisam's work among the Arabs in Israel and the surrounding countries. His life has been one miracle after another as God blesses his work under difficult and dangerous conditions.

OVER
50
YEARS
OF MINISTRY



The Pentecostal pastor was moved and amazed by Wisam's story, but he kept going back to one nagging question: Why did a Muslim like Wisam choose the Adventist Church instead of any of the many evangelical churches?

This bothered him so much that he couldn't rest and began searching for other content on social media. He came upon Cami Oetman's AWR series, *Unlocking Bible Prophecies*, as well as my series, *Earth's Final Countdown*. Then, by some miracle of providence, he found Wisam Ali's email address and decided to write to him with that very question: *Out of all the Christian churches, why did you choose the Adventist Church?*

Now, by another miracle or coincidence, we had invited Wisam to come to America for a series of AWR programs to be recorded at 3ABN, along with a weekend rally. So, when this Pentecostal pastor asked Wisam why he had chosen the Adventist Church, Wisam replied, "The *why* is a big question, but I will be in the United States in a few weeks, and we can speak then."

The Pentecostal pastor was overjoyed and said, "Wonderful! Come visit us in our church and share with us. We want to know why you chose to become an Adventist! You are coming from a Muslim background, and yet you chose the Sabbath."

And just like that, last month, Wisam traveled to Chicago to speak at this Pentecostal church! He spent the weekend sharing our beliefs straight from the Bible. The congregation was all-in and accepted everything Wisam presented . . . that is, until he got to the Sabbath truth. "That's when the church split down the middle," Wisam said. "The pastor and half the congregation understood and accepted, but the other half said, 'We can't accept this truth.'"

Nevertheless, they stayed and listened to the whole presentation. The pastor and his family—his wife, his four children and his mother—accepted the Sabbath and asked Wisam to stay another day to talk more on the subject!

So the next day, Monday, he stayed the whole day with them discussing the topic of the Sabbath. The Pentecostal pastor and his family were excited and amazed at what they learned, and Wisam promised to share more with them in the coming weeks.

Wisam said, "When we parted, the pastor told me, 'I believe in the Sabbath and will keep it, even if it causes me to lose my church. I will start a new one, but I will follow the truth even if my church rejects me!'"

As they said goodbye, they prayed for the other half of the congregation to accept the Sabbath truth, and the pastor and his family said they would be following the AWR presentations and videos.

God's Spirit is impressing hearts everywhere, because time is short. He's telling us, "I'm coming soon!" And as we read in Luke 14:23: "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in!"

UPDATE FROM ISRAEL AND THE GAZA STRIP

Pastor Wisam now faces huge challenges in Israel. Before the war began between Israel and Hamas, he had 28 people studying the Bible in the Gaza Strip, and 300 in the West Bank. Now he is unable to contact any of them and is unaware of their fate. He knows God saw the future and opened a way for them to accept Jesus just in the nick of time, but Wisam also hopes for a miracle. Whatever the outcome, he knows they're in God's hands.



Wisam and Duane McKey talk about miracles in the Middle East during a recent rally in Tennessee.



MIRACLES AT A GLANCE

There is so much more to share that remains unsaid every month for lack of space. That's why I will share a brief overview and a few highlights of what we're seeing around the world, and how God is guiding people and our AWR ministry in unexpected ways:

- ▶ We just finished an evangelistic series in Pakistan. That we were able to do this at all is a story in itself, and a series of miracles. But the greatest miracle was that 256 precious people accepted Jesus and were baptized!
- ▶ Right now, as you receive this letter, our AWR team is in Mindanao, Philippines, for another amazing miracle: the baptism of 1,200 rebel fighters from that island! This is Mindoro all over again, except with a heightened level of danger. We will be sharing more in the coming months.
- ▶ In China, one of our AWR workers had 70 people ready for baptism. They had agreed to have the service in the bathtub of one of the homes. The authorities discovered this and cut the water to the house to stop the baptism! But when the neighbors found out, even though they weren't Christians, they all pitched in and brought pails of water and filled the bathtub so the baptism could continue!
- ▶ We have been receiving amazing responses from our radio station in Israel. Pastor Wisam reports that the majority of those requesting information are men, between the ages of 25-60, from countries that include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, to name a few.
- ▶ We are now preparing 1,000 Godpods to ship to Israel—500 in Hebrew and 500 in Arabic—so that people on both sides of the conflict can hear the good news of salvation.
- ▶ We recently received a letter from an AWR listener in Zimbabwe: "I'm from an apostolic church, but our president firmly believes in Ellen White's writings. Our church also worships on the Sabbath. Not long ago, I visited Ireland and attended an Adventist church for the first time. I started following the health message and felt convicted to consecrate my life to Jesus. I thank God for giving me the courage to do so. I feel like I've been given a second chance at life!"
- ▶ Recently an imam—a Muslim spiritual leader—in an undisclosed country, requested baptism. Please keep him in your prayers.
- ▶ We have received amazing follow-up reports on the solar-powered Godpods you helped to provide for the Hutterites in the United States and Canada. One mother wrote: "My boys love theirs. They listen to them every waking minute of the day. I have often gone to check up on them when they are asleep, and the pod is still on. I love the idea that they fall asleep with the Good Word. Thank you!"
- ▶ We are praying and planning to open a Center of Influence that will also serve as a church in the city of Bethlehem. This seems impossible right now since the place where Jesus was born is now in the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. But nothing is impossible with God. Please keep this much-needed project in prayer.
- ▶ We are planning to launch 100 additional radio stations in 100 languages! This is a huge project, another "impossible" that with God will soon be a reality.
- We are also preparing for evangelistic events in Tanzania this January, Rwanda in February and Papua New Guinea in April and May. Keep these events in your prayers, and if you'd like to participate (both evangelistic and health volunteers are needed!), you can visit and register at awr.org/missiontrips.



These Hutterite brothers often fall asleep listening to their AWR Godpod.

REVIEWING GOD'S GOODNESS

Many years have passed since that Christmas when I chopped down my first tree. I no longer think as a child, and my Christmas wish list has changed. This year we'll celebrate with our family the day on which most of the Christian world remembers Christ's birth, but Kathy and I feel we don't need gifts. After all, it's His birth we're honoring! For a few years now, we've been doing something different and choosing an AWR project to support. This year will be no different, and we've chosen a major contribution for the church and Center of Influence in Bethlehem.



The star that shone over Bethlehem was the promise of a Savior. Soon, the Good News will again beam across this region through AWR's Center of Influence. Pray for this project.

There are so many needs to choose from: Godpods for Ukraine, Russia, Israel, or for the rebels in Mindanao; support for the new radio stations, the Guam towers, or the many evangelistic events coming up. The list is endless and the needs are huge, but we also know that in God's hands "little is much," and that when we all work together for the family of God, miracles happen!

There's no greater joy than being a part of the family of heaven and inviting others to that great reunion when Jesus Himself will say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you . . . for I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me . . . Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it unto me."
(Matthew 25:34-40)

Yours in the Blessed Hope,



Duane McKey
President



P.S. Isn't God amazing? It was His Spirit who guided the Pentecostal pastor in his quest to find Wisam, and it's His Spirit who is convicting hearts everywhere—because Jesus is coming soon! We're never alone when we work together for the salvation of others. Thank you for making such a profound difference.