

## **Reaching Families for Jesus**

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When I was in high school, being young and rebellious in spirit, I had done something that I would regret much later. At that time, I recognized some classmates who were attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I used to make fun of their faith and unkindly bullied them. The sharp differences in the Adventist faith and practices were the subject of my mockeries. Their beliefs and practices were very contradicting to my treasured beliefs and preferred lifestyle. It never occurred to me even once that I was being mean and scornful to them at that time. When college life arrived, it became even worse. I was careless in everything wasting my health and life away. I became a heavy drinker and practiced very unhealthy habits. Religion had no place in my heart and lifestyle. My life was spinning out of control into a dark pit.

It was only after college years that a strand of light began to shed on my life path. I was working as an internship in Dagupan City, and I was, somehow, being inspired to consider my life's goal and re-examine my lifestyle seriously. I began to be curious about the meaning of life and started seeking for the truth. I decided to attend some religious gatherings, looking and hoping for what would satisfy my thirst with spiritual water. To my disappointment, there was really nothing more than what I already knew. My heart kept yearning for something that I did not fully understand. I realized that there must be something for me that would fill the void of longing in my heart. After trying and not being able to find anything, I soon started to become sluggish in my pursuit of spiritual search and life fulfillment.

A year later, I started a travel agency and tourism business in Manila. It was there that I met a severe accident that had left me badly injured. This incident had, not only injured me physically, but also shattered my pride and arrogance. After I recovered, I set out, once again, my search for the truth. I was very certain that God had given me a second chance to live, and I must make the best use of it to make a difference. I was desperate. I began and tried my search in all places in looking for the truth that would help me live by joyfully. I browsed the Internet, bought books, and even studied Islam, Buddhism, and other religions; but unfortunately, I did not find what I was intently looking for.

God's grace was finally revealed when I began praying continually for God to lead me to the truth. I prayed that He would facilitated and led to know the truth by the right channel. God graciously answered my earnest prayer in the

morning of the following day, which was also the Sabbath day. He had somehow led me to Brother Royberto Anoos, a Seventh-day Adventist member who was also a total stranger to me. We were caught up by chance and had conversation about faith. The outcome of that faith talk had drawn my attention and curiosity to study the Bible and find out more about Adventist belief and the faith community of this church. Brother Royberto also invited me to his church and introduced me to some of the brethren who warmly welcomed me.

That Sabbath day I learned about the true rest day and clean and unclean foods. This piece of information stunned me because it was also part of many health principles found in the Bible. I learned of Mrs. Ellen G. White who expounded the truth further for us to better understand God's will in our lives. From that day on, I decided to stop eating unclean foods and keep the true Sabbath. Upon having learned them, I was compelled to immediately share with my wife. Soon we found ourselves joining the Bible class "Storacles", completing Voice of Prophecy lessons, and attending evangelistic meetings. After three months of studying the Word of God, my wife and I decided to accept Jesus as our Savior and Friend. We were baptized on May 14, 2016.

I was continually on fire to share my new-found faith to my family. When I went for a vacation in my province, I invited my father and my oldest brother to accompany me to the local Seventh-day Adventist Church. To our surprise, most of the members in the church were our relatives; they received us excitedly and with open arms. We belong to each other with two unbreakable bonds, the bond of blood-related family and the bond of God's big family. I continued to keep in touch with my parents and siblings and shared the good news with them. In no time, I received the my most-awaited news—my parents and all my siblings (except my sister who lives in US) were receiving the baptism and it was done on our baptismal anniversary on May 13, 2017. My wife and I were overjoyed. Soon, more family members joined the Adventist Church. It is our vow to God that we would to keep expanding God's kingdom right here on earth by beginning with our family!

We cannot stop expressing and thanking the Holy Spirit for working wonders within us, bringing transformation and reformation to our lives. At present, we are the only Adventists in our village; nevertheless, we strongly believe that through our Adventist lifestyle, people in the community will see Christ through us. Showing compassion, love, and hospitality that brings change in a person's life is the best testimony in favor of Christ. The Lord says in John 10:16, *"... other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they*

*shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”*. Let us continue to Reach Families for Jesus. The family we save may be our own!