

Personal Faith Journey Edgar J. Elliston

Fortunately, I was raised in a Christian family. On both on my father's and mother's sides of the family were multiple generations of Christians. My earliest recollections of being in church were in the toddler department. Through elementary school, junior and high school, I never missed going to church and participating in "Sunday school" "church" and youth meetings. When I was nine years old, I came to realize that I needed to make a decision for myself along with a commitment to Jesus as both Lord and Savior. I remember having a conversation with my pastor, Dean Burton following a series of evangelistic meetings in my home church. After that conversation, I was baptized along with others after our Easter worship service in April of 1952.

While in high school, I became a leader in our church's youth group, played the piano, organ and regularly led in worship. In 1959 while at a Christian camp I sensed the Lord's leading to prepare for a full-time ministry. While I had earlier had exposure to and correspondence with missionaries supported by my family, this further commitment led to my going to a Christian college and a growing interest in missions.

Between my freshman and sophomore years in a Christian college, I began working as a "student pastor" for a small rural church. While there for the next four and a half years, I preached every Sunday, taught a Sunday School class, called, did baptisms, weddings, and funerals. There I learned a great deal about ministry and saw the Lord working in my life.

After marrying in 1964, we accepted the call to prepare for mission work in Ethiopia. To prepare for mission work I completed an M.A. at Fuller Seminary in missiology and did additional training with Wycliffe Bible Translators in linguistics. Both sets of experiences deeply impacted my spiritual life—particularly my confidence in the Lord's answering prayer.

We served in Ethiopia and Kenya over a period of 18 years during which time the Lord continued to work with us in many ways. We experienced the exhilaration of seeing hundreds of miraculous events alongside the tragedies of living through a revolution in Ethiopia and an attempted coup in Kenya. In both places we experienced fear and uncertainty in the midst of angry mobs, and yet saw His protection. We also saw the Lord lead in the establishment of many new congregations with more than 10,000 new believers. We saw Him care for us in family health emergencies and provision even in the midst of an evacuation when everything was lost except for a few clothes and major thefts from burglaries.


After leaving Ethiopia and Kenya, we continued to see the Lord at work both in our family and in my work at the School of World Mission at Fuller. While there not only was I blessed by my work colleagues, but by my mature students from more than 80 countries with whom I had opportunity to work. Seeing first-hand how the Lord was working in many cultures only increased my confidence and I have often been surprised with what He has done.

We are blessed in the church where we are members. Since we are active in several different ministries, we have become acquainted more broadly and have more opportunities to see the Lord at work confirming our faith. It is a congregation of about 4500. We have been involved in directing small groups, leading small groups, missions, the prayer ministry, and others.

I have seen the Lord to be faithful in both exciting times and challenging times. I continue to be blessed through the Bible studies where I lead. We are often seeing answers to prayer strengthening our faith.

After moving to Marion, Indiana to work with Indiana Wesleyan University, my wife and I were active in the College Wesleyan Church in Marion. We were involved in a weekly Bible study where I served as an alternate leader. We were only in Marion from the first of February through June, 2008.

I have seen over the years how God has protected, provided, guided, disciplined and cared for me to shape me along the way. This testimony would be too long to relate in this response. I could relate how I have been in numerous "life threatening" situations, e.g., being threatened by mobs and while held hostage, being encircled by hyenas, being struck by lightning, having my pilot get lost in a storm, etc. I could describe His guidance while being struck with hepatitis and unable to walk for six months while I had been responsible for a dozen elementary schools, teaching, leading in a church planting ministry and administering a clinic with 1500 patients per month. I could describe his provision through our home Bible study group this last fall when being summarily dismissed from a Christian university. I could describe His providence in countless ways with our family. I could almost pick a year and say, "This is the amazing thing the Lord did that year." That provision, guidance, discipline and working of the Spirit continues to convict me of sin, righteousness and judgment. Along with my wife, Donna, I continue to feel a strong need to be connected to a local congregation where we can have fellowship, share in Biblical teaching, engage in ministries and participate in communion with other believers.


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