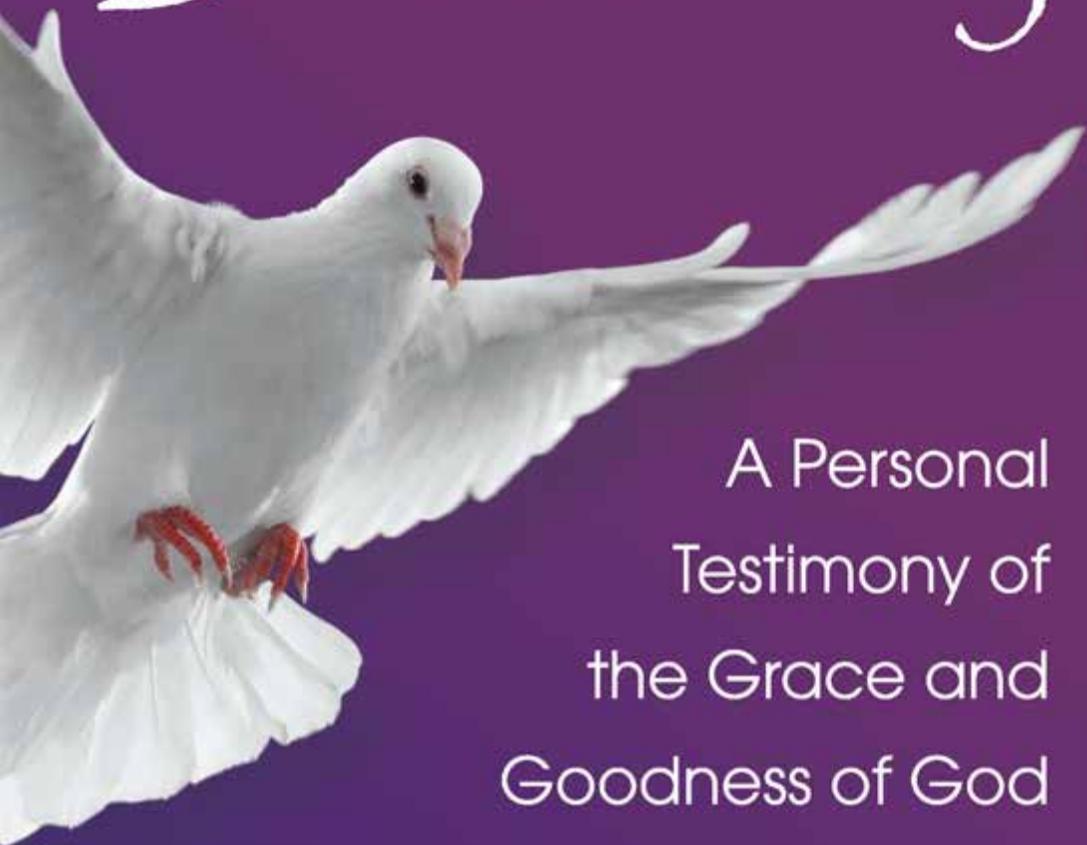


My Journey of Discovery



A Personal
Testimony of
the Grace and
Goodness of God

Zeph R. Edwards

My Journey of Discovery

*A Personal Testimony of
the Grace and Goodness of God.*

by
Zeph. R. Edwards

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife Cindy,
and our sons Eliot and Sean.

Acknowledgements

This book is the product of what God has been doing in my life. I am especially grateful to Angela Misselhorn and Jill Smuda, teachers at Crest Lane SDA Elementary School, who first read the manuscript and gave me their honest impressions. Through his testimony, Randy Fishell of the Review and Herald Publishing Association caused me to catch the vision for the work necessary to bring this book to fruition. I thanked Randy for his editorial skills and wise suggestions in his revision of the manuscript. This book was formed in my heart before it was typed on paper. God used many friends to encourage me in the writing of this book. I also want to thank my family. My wife Cindy, is a treasure and a gift from the Lord. Also our children Eliot and Sean, who are a blessed heritage from the Lord. Finally, I thank God for His gracious leading in writing this book. The Holy Spirit gave me the desire to write my testimony. Our loving Father initiated it and completed it. I give Him the glory for whatever blessings may come from this book.

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Introduction:

The purpose and intent of this story is to tell of the Lord's amazing grace and goodness in my life. The experiences that I have encountered are not uncommon to the human condition. To me the events that transpired were dreams that I had hoped and desired to achieve. The courage and the willingness to try and risk everything were based on the surety of my faith in the Almighty Creator, His holy word and his actions in my life and in human history.

Chapter one deals with my early experiences as a child and young adult, and the struggles I encountered. Chapter two concerns my attendance at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. This experience represents the aspiration and achievement of certain goals and dreams, and serves as an example and metaphor of my testimony.

Chapter three addresses the issues of relocation and life in Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area. In chapter four, I discussed the challenge and ordeals of living and attending medical school in the Dominican Republic, returning to the United States, and working as a religious literature sales representative with the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. In chapter five my family and I were engaged in the process of moving from Pennsylvania back to our home state of Maryland in search of work. It also contains the story of our trip to the United Kingdom and the death of my father. Chapter six captures the account of our travels to Hawaii, an automobile accident, the death of my mother and the

Lord's deliverance from a debt of \$53,000. In chapter seven, I pause and reflect on the nature and goodness of God's divine grace.

Chapter eight is an account of Cindy and me travelling to the G.C. convention in Atlanta, GA. We travelled to Michigan for her mother Natalie's birthday. I also traveled to the Caribbean to attend a convention. Cindy and I traveled to England for my niece's wedding, and then to Williamsburg, VA for our 40th wedding anniversary. Cindy was admitted to the hospital for surgery. In chapter nine, Cindy and I visit our son Sean in Maui, HI and celebrate our 41st wedding anniversary. In chapter 10, I reflect on Christ's supreme sacrifice in behalf of humanity and the entire universe.

Zeph R. Edwards

Chapter One

The Early Years

“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune, omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat: And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.” —William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, act 4, scene 3

One of the most remarkable events of my young life was the experience of a hurricane in 1954. The schools were closed! Many people boarded up their homes, businesses and shelters and secured their domestic and farm animals! Most of the week before the hurricane struck, was dark and cloudy, with rain and lightning. The day before the storm there was an eerie calm, with somber and overcast skies. Everyone were hunkered down in preparation for the coming tempest! We tried to get some sleep that night! At about 12:00 mid night or 1 am, the wind and rain picked up in intensity!

The rain came hard and the wind howled and screamed as a pack of wolves! The later it got, the more the wind whistled and boomed like a jet plane taking off on a giant runway! The whole house shook violently. The rafters on the roof were flapping noisily. The wind was violent and the rain was beating down with piercing furry. No one slept! We clung to each other and prayed for the break of day to come! When morning came, we discovered that the roof was leaking and other parts of the house were damaged. We all got some clothes and blankets and walked over to a relative's house, not far from where we lived, and weathered the rest of the receding storm, but especially for safety's sake, because our house was damaged. The morning after the hurricane passed,

many houses, businesses and property were damaged or destroyed as a result of the storm. We were thankful to the Lord for saving our lives and that the damage to our house was not more widespread!

My father moved me from my grandparent's home and took me to live with his aunt (my grandmother's sister) Mrs. Jupiter Stewart and her family. We lived in the city of Saint James, Trinidad. I attended St. Agnes elementary school. These were wonderful years! I learned to appreciate music, education, faith and family life. Church life was happy and very family centered. Nine family members lived in the home. I believe that my father thought that this family situation will be better suited for my growth and development. Two of my cousins became school teachers, one was an attorney at law, another a business man and the others pursued profitable careers. I had good role models and a rich environment to encourage me to aspire and achieve my dreams. After completing my elementary education, I did not attend high school immediately. I worked at different occupations in order to support myself. I worked as a restaurant and hotel waiter and construction worker with my mother's brother, my uncle Colis Ambrose.

A major turning point in my life came while I was attending baptismal classes at the Stanmore Seventh-day Adventist church in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. My Bible instructor's name was Ms. Wiltshire. She was an unmarried lady who lived with her unmarried sister Millie in a big house in the town of Belmont, a suburb of Port-of-Spain, the capital city. There was a third sister, who was married and had a family. Her name was Mrs. Bascome. She had a son by the name of Horace.

Owing to my early preparation and religious upbringing, I was a diligent and perceptive student in the baptismal class. These qualities were recognized by Ms. Iris Wiltshire. She spoke to me more directly about my background and disposition. She inquired, "Zeph, you're doing well in your studies and responses during the classes. Have you always attended church?"

I responded, “I attended church most of my life, with a few missed periods in between.”

“Zeph you have a fantastic memory, she observed, how did that happen?”

“My dad is a great believer in memorization,” I confided. For example, when I was about eleven years old, he bought a book of English poetry (he loved the classics) and insisted that I memorized the entire small book of poetry, verbatim. I memorized almost all the poems in the book. My parents especially our mother, taught us children to commit to memory the “Our Father’s Prayer”, “The Ten Commandments”, the 23rd Psalm”, “The Beatitudes” and other passages of scripture.

Ms. Iris Wiltshire was truly impressed with my memory skills. She inquired, “you do have plans of going to high school, don’t you?”

To this I replied “of course, but I’m not sure.” I related to her my circumstances. My mom and dad were separated at the time. I was living with dad’s cousin and her husband, and had to work to help with living expenses. Being 15 years old, I was beyond normal age for entrance into high school. She offered to pay for me to attend a private high school, if I was willing to go.

“Would you like to go to high school, if I’m willing to help you?” I could not believe my ears! Without thought or hesitation, I said, “Yes, of course!” I thank the Lord profusely for His providence and loving-kindness! I applied, was accepted, and September of that year, I started classes at Ideal High School in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. I struggled with some of my classes, owing to instability in my home life. There were difficulties getting meals, school clothes, books, and transportation to and from school. When Ms. Iris Wiltshire saw the less than satisfactory performance of my report card, she was very surprised, to say the least. She felt that with my impressive memory and learning ability, I should have done much better with my studies. After making her aware of my home situation, she offered me another wonderful opportunity. She proposed, “how would you like to come and live

with me and my sister Millie, in our home?” I could not believe my good fortune and once again, without thought or hesitation, I said, “yes, I would be delighted to accept your offer!” After talking to my father and cousin Violet and her husband about the matter, I was allowed to go and live with Iris and Millie Wiltshire. Throughout my life, I thank the Almighty Creator for providing one of the most important opportunities of my life.

The day of my baptism in the Seventh-day Adventist church was a very special day. The ceremony was conducted by Pastor Charles Manoram of the Stanmore avenue church. The baptism ceremony was held at the Woodbrook Seventh-day Adventist church. While attending church at Stanmore avenue S.D.A. church I met and befriended a wonderful Christian family—the Maitlands. Bob and Alicia Maitland had 5 children: Monica, Louise, Carlyle, Lester, and Wendy Maitland. The friendship and kindness of this family meant more to me than they could ever know, even though I’ve expressed my gratitude to them several times and in tangible ways. Many times after leaving school, I was allowed to leave my books at their house. Their house was close to the high school I attended. Leaving several of my books at the Maitland’s home, and not having to carry extra school books a great distance, was a tremendous help. I had to travel at least one hour before I arrived at my home in the city of Diego Martin. Many times they offered me a meal and good advice and counsel. The Maitland family members were good role models. I was especially impressed with the academic accomplishments of Carlyle Maitland. The Maitland’s household was like my second home. This was definitely another provision from the Lord.

I do not recall exactly how I met the famous David Moore. He lived with his family in Woodbrook, Trinidad. He was the only one in his family that attended the S.D.A. church. He attended Osmond high school. David had many conflicts and expressed sentiments of self-doubt and lack of confidence. I tried to encourage him to have a more positive attitude towards life in general and his Christian walk in particular. David was a kind and gentle person.

I was a frequent visitor at his parent's home. He was one of the most original artist, I have ever known. He produced breath taking scenes of nature, portraits, buildings, people in action and animals in their natural habitats. We had a mutual admiration for each other. Sometimes I found myself wishing that I was as artistically talented, educated, and had a stable family background as David had. He often told me that he wished that he possessed my deep moral and strong spiritual values. For a long time, I did not understand what he meant. I often wondered why he was so pessimistic and melancholy sometimes, even though he had the materialistic comforts of life. He visited some of my relatives with me. On one occasion we were travelling for most of the day, and it was getting to be night fall, and I thought that it would be best to get a good night sleep, and then continue my journey home the next day. I asked David if I can spend the night at his apartment, in as much as I had about 25-30 miles to travel that night before I arrived at my home. I was very surprised and disappointed when he said no he did not want me to spend the night in his apartment. I continued on my journey and got home very tired and late that night. He later apologized for his behavior, but never told me the real reason for his actions. For a long time, I thought that I may have said or did something terrible that may have upset David.

Many years later I received a letter from David while I was living in Washington D.C.. It was many pages long. It brought tears to my eyes. After thanking me for my friendship and the Christian example I had been to him, he said that he was receiving treatment for pneumonia and may have HIV. He said that several times he wanted to tell me that he was a homosexual, but he could not bring himself to admit his secret to me. He then explained to me that this is the reason why he did not want me to spend the night at his apartment, many years ago, because of the fear of discovery. As a Christian, understanding this condition had been difficult for me. The Bible plainly states that this activity and behavior is sin and an abomination to God. His grace, love, and forgiveness are offered to every sinner and every human being. My

friendship with David Moore gave me an insight and the capacity for acceptance of homosexuals as human beings who were created by God in the same way that every human being was created by God. This experience deepened my understanding of God's love and his desire that Christians must reflect this same love to others. We cannot accept sin, but we must accept sinners for whom Christ died.

Another character building experience occurred, when I became a member of the Pathfinder club (scouts) in our church. In Pathfinders there were meetings to attend and many required honors (badges) to fulfill. Some of the honors that I received were camping, various nature honors requiring knowledge and presentation about different trees, animals, rocks, the sun, moon, stars, and other planetary bodies. I also earned honors for volunteering in the community, neighborhood clean up projects, and nursing home visits. I met the requirements for biking, tying many different knots, and wilderness survival skills. I also fulfilled the requirements for the swimming and boating honors.

While attending high school I worked at different part-time jobs in the catering industry—mainly as a waiter in hotels and restaurants. I had mixed feelings about working in this industry. Even though I did not get a large salary, I made lots of tips and met many different and interesting people. I liked this aspect of the job. I had cognitive and moral conflicts about working as a bartender. I served people liquor and other spirits, even though I've always been a teetotaler. It was part of my job, but I still felt that I was doing something wrong. I also engaged with many people who had little or no moral scruples regarding their personal deportment. I worked and saved quite a good sum of money because I was hoping and planning to emigrate to the United States to further my education. The Lord favored me with His providence when I received the wonderful news that I was granted a visa to travel to the US. This was a dream that came through! After saying goodbye to family members and friends, I made the historic trip to the U.S. in 1968.

Most of the trip went well, until we arrived at J.F.K. International Airport in New York. When we changed planes in Miami, Florida, our luggage was not transferred to the aircraft that took us to New York. Pan American Airlines took the affected passengers to a hotel by limousine services. I never knew such a large car existed, let alone rode in one! Of course, there were no financial obligations involved, because Pan AM was responsible for the snafus. The next day, our luggage arrived from Miami, and we were taken to La Guardia Airport. From there, the passengers were flown to our various destinations. My flight was bound for Reagan airport, Washington D.C. This was a time of anxious anticipation for me. While I was in New York, I contacted (phoned) uncle Arthur, my mom's brother, and informed him of my itinerary. I have not seen him for many years and was not absolutely sure what he looked like. As we landed, I made my way to the immigration check point. After this process was completed, everyone proceeded to the baggage area to collect their luggage. I collected my two suitcases and made my way to the reception area. I began scanning the crowd for Uncle Arthur. After a while, I saw a moderately tall, medium built, middle aged man walking towards me. I knew it was him, because he resembled my mom. "Zeph, is that you? I'm your Uncle Arthur. How was your trip?" He reached out and took one of my two suitcases.

"The flight from Trinidad to Miami, Florida and to New York was long but enjoyable. Even though our bags were left in Miami, Florida, everything turned out well. As we walked towards his car, we continued our conversation.

"What's your impression of America so Far?"

"I'm amazed at how large everything is, and how much in a hurry everyone was. I rode in the largest car (limousine) I've ever seen in my life. The streets were the broadest and the buildings were the largest I've ever seen. I don't understand how a building as tall as the Empire State building does not topple and fall when strong winds blow." We finally reached the parking lot where he parked his car. We placed the luggage in the trunk, and

started on our way to his home in Seat Pleasant, Maryland. We continued our conversation in the car.

“Tell me about the family back home, how are they doing?”

“My mom and dad are well and doing fine, so are my brothers and sisters. After being sick with an abdominal disease, for some considerable length of time, Aunt Ruth (Uncle Arthur’s sister) went to be with the Lord.” We talked about other members of the family for the duration of the trip home to Seat Pleasant, Maryland.

The ensuing days, weeks, months were full of adjustments—dietary, cultural, linguistic and logistical. Owing to the busy professional lives of my uncle and his wife, Pam (a nurse), they did not make home cooked meals everyday, like I’d grown accustomed to having. I got in the habit of eating cereals and cooking my own meals. The changing of the seasons were a major item. I’ve always known spring and summer seasons. I had to learn and adjust to autumn and winter as well. Winter was by far the hardest season I’d had to deal with. I’d never seen real snow and had no experience of how to live and deal with it. However, with the proper clothes, encouragement from family and acquaintances, and a good attitude, I adjusted and actually grew to like and enjoy the winter season. The fact that Christmas time is my favorite time of the year, greatly helped in my process of adjustment. I’d always spoken English, therefore I had no difficulty understanding the language. However, my English was from a British background and emphasis. There were challenges with some intonations and pronunciations. However, with practice and public speaking, almost all difficulties with accentuation were resolved with the passing of time. In school, at all levels, I excelled in English and all literary courses.

The matter of transportation was another area of difficulty and challenge. In 1968, I did not yet have my driver’s license. I signed up with the Easy Method Driving School, and after several lessons, I successfully acquired my Maryland driver’s license. This was one of the happiest days of my life!

Owing to the fact that I had some difficulty acquiring my high school transcripts from Trinidad, I was required to take the GED course. Instead of doing that, I purchased a book that prepares one for the test. I studied the book, took the GED test, and passed without difficulty. I gave thanks and praise to the Lord for his goodness!

For some time, I gave serious thought to a career and future endeavors. This opportunity came, when uncle Arthur helped me to qualify for the Certify Laboratory Assistant course that was taught at Washington D.C. General Hospital. This was a federal government program, twelve months in duration, that I did not have to pay for. The course included Hematology, Blood Banking, Chemistry, Microbiology, Bacteriology, Urinalysis, and Phlebotomy. This was a hard and trying experience, but by God's grace, I was able to complete this year-long course. This experience placed me on a successful pathway of accomplishment. I want to emphasize my thankfulness and gratitude to uncle Arthur for his kindness, encouragement, and advocacy on my behalf. He contributed greatly to my growth, development, and success.

While I was doing the clinical laboratory course at Washington D.C. General hospital, Ms. Virginia (Gene) Ross, who taught bacteriology and microbiology, was of enormous help and encouragement to me. She accepted another job offer and left the program when I was about three quarters of the way to finish. I did not know who her new employer was. As a result I lost track of her whereabouts. After graduating from the medical technician course, I worked as a part-time phlebotomist at several different clinics and hospital facilities. I came to understand that Ms. Virginia Ross was the evening supervisor of the clinical laboratory at Children's Hospital National Center. I paid her a visit and she gave me a job in the laboratory. This was my first full-time job as a laboratory technician. Without question, this opportunity was made possible by my Heavenly Father. I worked in three (3) different parts of the laboratory. I worked in hematology, blood banking, (immunohematology) and urology (urinalysis).

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This job was a blessing on several levels. It greatly expanded my knowledge and experience in the field of medical technology. It was the highest paid income I'd ever received. I established a good savings account, I rented my first apartment, and purchased my first used car, a 1965 Ford Falcon. I started my college education at Prince George's Community College, in Largo, Maryland. During this period of time, I met and started dating a young lady by the name of Debbie Watkins. Her last name changed after she was subsequently married. After attending Prince George's Community College for 2-1/2 years, I decided to transfer to Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Chapter 2

Andrews University—Michigan

“I already know the plans I have for you. I will help you, not hurt you. I will give you a future and a hope.” —Jeremiah 29: 11 (The Clear Word)

When I made the decision to continue my education, I chose to attend Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. This is a Christian institution of higher learning and a world-class University as well. Andrews University epitomizes and illustrates the reason for my story—the promise and reality of faith and hope in the aspiration and achievement of my goals and dreams. To have the opportunity to learn, work, play and live with scholars and people from different parts of the world, with whom I share similar beliefs, principles and values have been a very moving experience for me. Every teacher and event was dedicated to the success of the learning process. As I interacted with my professors and fellow students, I was invited to dinner, and fellowshipped in the homes of several faculty members. In these settings I saw how my teachers interacted with their family members as well as students in an informal way. On-campus and off-campus retreats and activities were laboratories, where long term relationships were formed, and effective learning experiences transpired.

As a person who came from a modest background and a broken family, to have the opportunity to attend a private institution of higher learning such as Andrews University never entered my imagination as a young child. I hoped and dreamed of attending and finishing high school. This was the extent of my aspiration, as far as formal education was concerned. I knew that I had to get out in the real world, find a job, and earn a living. That is exactly

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This book is the story of Zeph Edward's life, from his early experiences as a child and young adult in Trinidad and the struggles he encounters, to being a college student and young husband dealing with the issues of race and interracial marriage, to his successes as a laboratory technician, nurse, counselor, and teacher.

Throughout each step of this journey, Zeph gives the glory to God and holds on with faith to the plan God reveals for his life. This is truly a story of when one door closes, God opens another. If you have struggled through adversity and have been discouraged when things don't work according to plan, be encouraged by Zeph's story.

In this book you will read about Zeph's baptism, schooling, and enrollment in a Seventh-day Adventist college. You will also read about when he meets his beautiful wife and their experiences with prejudice as a bi-racial couple and their move to the Dominican Republic for medical school. You will read about Zeph's faith and character being challenged in the workplace and how God leads him through. And you will read about Zeph using his talents from God as a counselor, teacher, father, and husband.



Zeph, Cindy, Eliot, and Sean Edwards are from Westminster, Maryland. Zeph attended Andrews University where he met his wife, Cindy. After attending Andrews, Zeph transferred to Washington Adventist University, in Takoma Park, Maryland, where he earned a B.A. degree in Psychology. He also holds diplomas in medical technology and nursing and attended graduate school at Liberty University for counseling.

Zeph has worked for the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, for Washington Adventist Hospital in the clinical laboratory, and as a full-time Literature Evangelist, in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Other positions he has held over the years include nurse, counselor, and part-time high school teacher.

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