

# A TEST OF FAITH



Photo: Ken Werner, Werner Creative Photo, Roseburg, Oregon

*The Romani Family: Charley & Sarai, with their children: Jordan (standing L), Josiah (standing R), Benjamin (seated L), and Aaron (seated center). They currently live near Roseburg, Oregon.*

Charley Romani lay in bed one Saturday morning, flipping through the few channels he could pick up with his “rabbit ears” antenna. He was accustomed to his old satellite dish offering 150 channels, but now, living in a friend’s converted garage, he had very little from which to choose. The selections of over-the-air channels in Roseburg, Oregon, were limited, but one of them caught his attention. Suddenly he felt

God speaking directly to him as he watched channel 47, a 3ABN affiliate station owned by Better Life Television. What he heard that morning made him sit up in bed, fully awake!

“Charley and I both came from traumatic childhoods,” his wife, Sarai, says. “We were so broken when we met that neither of us felt we could ever love again. But something strange happened. God impressed both of us strongly that we were to

love each other, and we felt that He wanted us together.” They married, and although Sarai was told she couldn’t have children, her prayers were answered, and they were blessed with four wonderful boys.

But the next 14 years of marriage had turned into a nightmare. Despite their love of God and their search for truth, their brokenness had led them to damage each other—and their family.

“All was not as it should have been, and I knew that in my heart,” Sarai says. “There was something very big missing; and finally, the only way I thought I could find it was to throw everything out—all my preconceived ideas and everything I thought I knew—and ask God to start over. And that meant that Charley had to go.”

“My wife and I were separated at the time, and I was really discouraged and depressed,” Charley recalls. “Sarai had really closed the door this time, and there was no hope for our marriage. We had tried everything we could. We had been involved in many denominations, from Catholic to charismatic churches. I had even moved my

family across the country to join a ‘prophetic’ movement! But I saw too much hypocrisy and confusion—and they always wanted money. I saw pastors living in lavish homes, wearing expensive jewelry, and taking exotic vacations. But I didn’t see anyone getting the emotional help they needed. I kept asking

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myself, ‘Where is the heart of God in this?’”

In stark contrast, what Charley saw on his TV that morning amazed him. “It was the Ten Commandments Weekend,” he says, “and I saw incredible humility and reverence for God’s Word when the preachers would speak. Their message was precise and clear, and they spoke with authority, like Jesus did. I remember seeing David Asscherick kneel before the Lord before he spoke,” he continues, “and I thought to myself, ‘I’ve never seen a pastor on his knees praying with that kind of reverence before the Lord!’ I’d



boys with me, and in five minutes we were out the door.”

Just before this, Charley and Sarai had met Lisa Marie Buster, a Seventh-day Adventist music artist who had mentioned she belonged to the TurningPoint church in Roseburg. Impressed by her peace and her music, Charley had looked up her church. He knew where he would go that morning!

“The message that morning was just what I needed, and when an altar call was made, I went forward,” he says.

Soon he was on the phone to his wife. “Sarai, you’ve got to buy some ‘rabbit ears’ for your TV,” he told her excitedly. “You won’t believe what’s on! It’s what you’ve been looking for all your life!”

Soon they were both watching 3ABN. “We had searched the entire country, trying to find a church that lived what the Bible preached,” Sarai says, “and when I began watching the Ten Commandments Weekend, the first truth I found was the Seventh-day Sabbath. I was raised an Orthodox Jew, but now I discovered that it hadn’t been given just to the Jews—God instituted it during the Creation week!

also never heard any pastor teach on all ten of God’s commandments. Sure, they might preach against adultery, but never on all ten of them.”

Charley says he finally realized the preachers were Seventh-day Adventists. “I knew very little of Seventh-day Adventists, but if that was what they were teaching in their churches, I was going right now! I had two of my

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“As I continued to watch Better Life Television and 3ABN, the second truth I discovered was that the book of Revelation could be understood by studying history! Then, on the subject of hell, the Bible clearly shows that it’s an *event*, not a *place*! From then on I was hooked. I stayed up nearly three days in a row watching 3ABN! I just couldn’t believe it. God was answering all those nagging questions I had wondered about for so long!”

But it wasn’t long before their faith was severely tested. Their business, a successful barbecue restaurant, had a lot of catering contracts on the weekends. Not feeling right about breaking the fourth commandment, they struggled with the decision to close on Friday night and all day Sabbath. As soon as they did, their business actually picked up—for two weeks. “I think God encouraged us during that time, letting us know that He would provide,” Sarai says. But then they began to lose money. Bills piled up as Charley tried desperately to get other catering companies to take over his weekend commitments. Several employees had

to be laid off, and people were complaining bitterly about the store hours. But the worst was still to come.

“I had learned that pork was an unclean meat,” he recalls, “and I immediately stopped eating it. I didn’t even want to touch it, and the smell bothered me. I remember having a hard time serving it to the pastors in my community, and it bothered



me that they were smiling as they took their plate of pork ribs! Didn’t they know what the Bible said about pork? I shared my concerns with Sarai, and she said, ‘Is serving pork loving your neighbor as yourself?’ Her words caught me off guard,” Charley admits. “I spoke with the pastors at my church, and called 3ABN’s prayer line

almost weekly for prayer and counsel.”

Finally, at the urgings of the Holy Spirit and 3ABN’s Pastor Richard Piñero, Charley broke down. “I cried on the telephone that day, and then I threw out nearly \$500 worth of pork. My employees thought I was crazy. ‘He’s lost it now,’ they said, but once I made the decision, I felt relieved. I knew I’d opened up a real controversy with my customers and employees, though. I knew how much they loved their pork!”

A newspaper article gave an accurate account of what was going on. It described Charley and Sarai’s new beliefs, and their reasons for closing on Saturday and taking pork off the menu. But no one was prepared for the fiery backlash! Angry letters and e-mails were sent to the newspaper. Charley was accused of being a bad businessman, and a world of misunderstanding suddenly showed up in the rants posted on the newspaper’s website.

Under growing pressure, Charley and Sarai clung to God’s promises, even as their problems multiplied. Their electricity at home was turned off, and

they were three months behind on the lease payments for their business. Even though it had been up for sale for months, no one had shown interest in buying it. During that time, though, their church family rallied around them, and God impressed many Christians to support them financially as best they could.

But finally it looked like they were going to lose everything. That night they knelt next to their bed and Sarai read the story of the widow whose sons were about to be taken into slavery by her creditors in the time of the prophet Elisha. (2 Kings 4:1–7.) Earnestly Sarai pleaded for her own miracle until she heard the voice of God speaking to her heart saying, “Tomorrow I will show Myself faithful to you.” When she shared this with Charley, they knelt together in agreement. Soon Charley heard the Lord speaking to his heart as well. Their business would be sold the next day.

“You will not believe this. Are you sitting down?” It was Charley’s realtor on the phone the next morning. “We don’t have just one offer,” she continued, “we have *three* offers coming in

today, and they’re beginning to bid up the price!”

“I was sitting at my computer and I looked up to heaven and wept,” Charley says. “I felt like a thousand pounds had been lifted off my chest and were melting away.” An hour and a half later, a couple walked into his restaurant and offered to write a check on the spot. “Then I knew it was for real,” he says.

His barbecue business was sold, allowing Charley to pay back his investors and catch up on all his overdue bills. There was even some left over to keep his family going until he finds another job.

“We want to work for the Lord,” Charley says, “even though we don’t have any idea what He wants us to do yet.”

“God honors those who honor Him,” Sarai adds. “We honored Him the best we knew how, and God has created a whole new life for us. We just celebrated our 15th wedding anniversary, and God has healed our marriage in an incredible way. I finally found God’s place of rest for my soul. I’d never had that before, but now I’m at peace in my marriage, with my kids, my finances, and with my eternal destiny.”



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“I’m eternally grateful for Better Life Television and 3ABN, because without them we’d still be lost,” Charley says. “God used television to bring us the truth we had searched for all our lives. Today I can get the dose of truth I need for each day, and it’s even improved my health. By showing me a better diet, I’ve lost twenty pounds!”

He pauses for a moment, then a hint of a smile creeps across his face. “They say you learn everything you need for life in kindergarten,” he chuckles. “Well, I guess all I ever needed was ‘rabbit ears,’ and I learned that when I was a kid!” ■