

WHAT GOD HAS DONE

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

PROVERBS 3:5-6

Ron and Marta Davis never dreamed their journey would take them where it has. The last thing they could have imagined doing would be managing Better Life Broadcasting Network, the second-largest Seventh-day Adventist television network in the world.

Ron was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and because his father

Then, when I was 14, my parents abruptly got divorced, and my whole world came apart. I'd always been a straight-A student, but I decided no one cared about anything, so I became very rebellious. I moved back to Missouri with my mom, but two years later I was in so much trouble I decided to go live with my dad again in California!”

Nevertheless, God had a plan for Ron's life, and his grades and relationships improved. And then there was Marta!

“We were both 16, and I just couldn't believe that someone that nice would consider being with a loser like me!” Ron says.

Marta was raised in Bell Gardens, California, a small town south of Los Angeles. “My father left when I was two,” she says, “and because my mother couldn't work and care for three children, we were sent to foster

“We had both come from broken families, and we were determined to stick with each other, no matter what.”

worked for a railroad, his family moved around quite a bit. “We lived in Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, and California,” he says, “and although my grandparents would take me to church once in a while, I never remember them telling me about Jesus.



PHOTO SUPPLIED BY RON & MARTA DAVIS

Ron and Marta Davis never dreamed God would call them to manage the network they discovered in Grants Pass, Oregon. Today their work at Better Life Broadcasting Network is rich and rewarding.

homes for the next seven years. For some reason we all took it in stride. We looked forward to seeing our mother on weekends, and cherished the occasional visit from our father. Then we went to live with our uncle and our aunt, who was a devout Mormon. While all of us grew up very independent,” she adds, “we never got into any major trouble, and were reunited with our mom when I was nine.”

During their senior year in

high school, Ron and Marta got engaged. “We had both come from broken families, and we were determined to stick with each other, no matter what,” he says. “When we married we wanted seven children, but instead we wound up with two of the best kids we could ever hope for.”

So how did this young couple find the Lord?

“Well, we joined the Mormon church when we first got



The Davis family lived for the weekends, but until their lives were centered around Christ, something was missing.

married because we wanted to have whatever it was that made families solid,” Ron says. “The Mormon teachers came by our house, and when they told me I couldn’t drink or smoke it was a struggle. I did put those things down—but I hated every minute of it! Later, when the topic of tithing came up, I thought, *Great. Now they’re after my money!* They were planning a new building project, and when they sent us a ‘bill’ based on our income, that was it! I went to the corner store and bought a pack of cigarettes and a six-pack of beer.”

Ron admits they lived for the weekends while he enjoyed a successful career in computer programming. “By this time I

was an atheist, and Marta was an agnostic,” Ron says.

“Not only agnostic—but ignorant of what God’s Word had to say,” Marta adds. “However, when we were in our mid-30s, a friend got saved and began witnessing to us.”

“He also gave me Hal Lindsey’s book, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*,” Ron explains. “Suddenly I understood there was this thing called *prophecy*, and I was fascinated. Here I found Someone who knew what was going to happen, and was bold enough to say it! Of course, I didn’t really know what I was talking about, but I knew I wasn’t supposed to take the mark of the beast!”

Soon after, Ron changed jobs and began carpooling with a born-again Christian. They had long discussions about the book of Revelation, and one day they were invited to an Easter brunch and sunrise service.

“All I heard was brunch,” Marta says, “but I didn’t object going to the service. There were several thousand people there, and it was lovely. Afterwards, they had an altar call, and although I had no experience with this kind of thing, I bowed my head and closed my eyes. When they asked us to raise our hand if we wanted to follow Jesus, I didn’t raise mine, but my whole family did!

I missed that fact, but as we walked down the stairs toward the field instead of the parking lot, the dime dropped! I thought, *Don't make waves, just go along with it*, as they prayed over us, but I didn't know what 'saved' meant. However, something important happened that day. I'd never read the Bible because it was just a bunch of fables to me, but soon after, I decided to see what it said. I also began attending church with my family, and after several more altar calls, I knew I wanted to accept Jesus Christ. As I think back, I realize the Lord had accepted my willingness to be willing, but now I had a personal relationship. I saw my prayers answered, and that was amazing!"

The Lord wasted no time in changing their hearts and habits. "I was a social drunk," Ron says. "Although I didn't drink alone, I usually drank too much at social gatherings."

"I would come home and have a few glasses of wine to cope with the fact that my husband was often out drinking with his friends," Marta adds, "but now neither one of us could see Jesus doing that, so we didn't want to drink anymore. God completely removed the desire from us both."

They joined a Foursquare Church and spent 16 wonderful

years in that congregation. Ron even became a lay pastor, but then the Northridge earthquake hit California, and that changed everything!

"We were sound asleep, and I woke up feeling like someone had grabbed the top of our house and was trying to shake us out," Marta recalls. "It was

"I woke up feeling like someone had grabbed the top of our house and was trying to shake us out."

a violent up and down motion, and although I'd been through dozens of earthquakes, I'd never experienced something this severe. Furniture was flying, glass was breaking, and Ron was crying out to the Lord!"

When it was over, their home was ruined, but their lives were spared. They lived in their fifth-wheel trailer while their house was being rebuilt, but the aftershocks continued to unnerve them. Meanwhile, their daughter and son-in-law moved to Grants Pass, Oregon, so Ron and Marta sold their interest in their software company and became "snowbirds," spending summers in Oregon, and winters in Mexico.

During their second summer in Oregon, they flipped through the channels and found Better

Life TV, a 3ABN affiliate. They had never really liked Christian TV. “In fact,” Marta says, “I’d always thought it more theatrical than honest. But this fellow named Doug Batchelor was on, and he was asking the question ‘Is the devil in charge of hell?’”

Ron chuckles. “I remember saying, ‘Marta, listen to this guy! He’s off the wall!’ But we soon realized the presenters on this

said no. The Word of God is above the opinion of man, and once we really understood that this was the Word of God, we applied it to our lives and joined the church by profession of faith.

“The people were so loving, we couldn’t wait to get involved. We wanted to know and learn everything—as much as when we were baby Christians! We became very active in our new church, and wanted to be available for the Lord, perhaps becoming missionaries somewhere,” he continues. “So we studied, prayed, and watched 3ABN and Better Life TV. They meant a lot to us, because we had received God’s message through watching them. It wasn’t long before we became volunteer camera operators, tape duplicators, or whatever they needed.”

Then the station manager left, and several people suggested they should apply for that position. “I brushed it off at first,” Marta says, “but someone suggested the same thing to my husband a few days later, so we thought we should pray about it.”

After laying several “fleeces” before the Lord, they were both convinced they should apply—even though they knew the board had their eye on someone else. “But that fellow didn’t work out, so we were it!” Marta laughs. “We literally tried to talk them

“We literally tried to talk them out of it when we went to see them, and since we couldn’t, we accepted.”

station were just regular people, so we continued watching.”

That winter they lived in Chapala, Mexico, in a little house that just happened to have a satellite dish. Imagine their surprise when they turned on the TV—and found 3ABN again!

“By the next spring we couldn’t deny the Bible teachings,” Ron says, “so we came back determined to try the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our friends didn’t understand, and even accused us of being legalistic about worshipping on Sabbath. They tried to point out texts that seemed to say Sabbath observance had been done away with. But when we asked if any other commandments had been done away with, of course they



Since Better Life abandoned their Share-A-Thons, they have enjoyed tremendous growth. It's amazing what God can do with only five employees and 100 volunteers!

out of it when we went to see them, and since we couldn't, we accepted—believing we would only be there for a short time!”

There was plenty to do, since there was only one other employee, but by their own admission, they had no television production experience. “Ron could work a remote control, and I could turn it off!” Marta says with a laugh.

Better Life had just purchased their first full-power TV station, and a huge stack of government rules and regulations sat on Ron's desk. “I hated working with government regulations,” he admits, “and it was tough for a while—until I surrendered and decided to jump in with both feet. If we're attempting to do God's work, we can't hold back. It's miserable if we do!”

Something else of great sig-

nificance happened the day they became station managers. Better Life's Board of Directors voted to stop having telethons, and rely solely on the Lord to impress those He would have support the ministry.

“We had no money for anything,” Marta says. “We were using scissors to cut VHS labels from large sheets, and were operating on a shoestring budget. We had no choice but to let people know what our needs were, and trust God to take it from there. Our headquarters consisted of two offices, a small studio, and a bathroom. Taping children's programs was nearly impossible, as I tried to keep 25 kids quiet in my office while someone else taped in the studio. They couldn't get a drink of water, or even go to the bathroom because it would have disrupted the taping! We

did that for two years, and finally decided to say something to the board. ‘Here’s the first \$100 for the building fund,’ we said, ‘and God will raise the rest of the \$80,000 we need!’”

And raise it He did! With help from Maranatha Volunteers International, they built a new studio, and converted the old one into office space. With the

TV station in Roseburg, Oregon, and another low-power station in Eugene have recently been added to the network. Although the original price was 4 million dollars, God miraculously made them both available for less than a quarter of that amount, adding 12,000 square miles to their viewing area, and doubling their potential audience to one million! But that’s not all. A brand new opportunity has just opened up in Portland, Oregon, for the purchase of a TV station that will reach over 2 million souls for God’s kingdom!

“Like the Israelites, we go around with wet toes,” Marta says. “We have to step into the water! If we don’t think big, pray big, and trust Him it doesn’t happen. It’s not presumption; we have evidence! We couldn’t even buy VHS labels when we had Share-A-Thons—and now we’re buying million dollar stations! It’s all God.”

Ron agrees. “Nehemiah 8:10 says, ‘The joy of the Lord is your strength.’ With all the things going on here, God continues to give us strength through His joy!”

He pauses for a moment, and then adds, “And it’s all done with five employees, and about 100 volunteers. Isn’t God amazing?” ■

“Like the Israelites, we go around with wet toes,” Marta says. “We have to step into the water!”

faithful support of their viewers, they purchased a remote production van, more lights, and a new automation system. Better Life TV became Better Life Broadcasting Network, a new monthly magazine was launched, and with the help of Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) and Maranatha, three new offices, an engineering workshop, and a conference room were added. Viewers flocked to the Better Life Camp Meetings, and new TV stations were added, for a current total of 18 stations and two repeaters. In addition, Better Life is now available on DirecTV and DISH Network satellite systems, as well as all the cable systems in their designated market area.

By God’s grace, a full-power