

A Visitor and a Dream

13th SABBATH | September 28



Erickson

Erickson has a story that few people have heard. He told part of the story to his mother. He told the whole story to his wife. His three young daughters have never heard the story. His late father never heard the story.

Erickson, who is a pastor and Seventh-day Adventist leader in Costa Rica, has been reluctant to share his story over fears that people wouldn't believe him. But after hearing a number of incredible testimonies as he helped Adventist Mission collect stories for this Mission quarterly in Costa Rica, he told his story to Adventist Mission. So, this Sabbath, you will be among the first to hear his whole story. The story changed his life. The story caused him to become a Seventh-day Adventist.

There were only two schools in the town where Erickson grew up in Guatemala: a public school and an Adventist school.

Father sent Erickson to public school for first grade, but the boy didn't see his teacher for the entire year. The teacher was in training, the school principal explained. The principal sometimes came to the first-grade

classroom to hand out assignments. But no one taught reading, math, or spelling to the children that year. Fortunately, Erickson had learned those subjects in kindergarten, so he was able to complete the occasional homework assignments. But many of his classmates failed first grade.

Father was disgusted with the public school system after that year, and he moved his son to the Adventist school for second grade. That was where he learned about God.

Before going to sleep at night, Erickson knelt beside his bed to pray.

"God, help me to make good decisions in my life," he prayed. "Help me in school. Help my family and especially my father."

The family was poor. Father worked as a bus driver far from home, and Erickson only saw him a few times every year. Despite their poverty, Father always managed to find funds to pay for Erickson's education at the Adventist school.

As Erickson prayed at night, he wished that he could see Father more often.

"Protect the bus and Mother so she can earn some money for our needs," he prayed. "Amen."

One night, when Erickson was 11 or 12, he prayed and then stretched out on his bed in the dark room. His eyes were open, but he



couldn't see anything in the dark.

Suddenly, a bright but soft light appeared on the ceiling above his head. It was not the light bulb; Erickson had turned it off before praying. The light lit the room. Erickson wasn't scared. He felt peaceful and relaxed.

Suddenly, a glowing being darted from the light to the floor. Erickson saw arms, legs, a body, and a head. But he couldn't see eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, or any other facial features. The head was surrounded by a soft glow. The being knelt in the same place where the boy had just prayed beside the bed. He put his hands together and bowed his head.

Erickson watched, wondering what would happen next.

Erickson's prayers usually lasted five or 10 minutes, but this prayer ended much more quickly. The being prayed for 60 to 90 seconds. Then he stood up and put one hand on Erickson's head and the other on his chest. Joy filled Erickson's heart. He imagined that he was seeing Jesus.

The being didn't say anything. After touching the boy's head and chest for a few seconds, he rose back up to the soft light, still shining on the ceiling. Then the light went out, and the bedroom plunged back into darkness.

Peace and calm flooded over Erickson. He sensed only goodness in the room. He quickly fell asleep.

The next day, Erickson told Mother about the experience. He felt closer to Jesus than ever before.

But that wasn't the end of the story.

Several months later, Erickson had a dream about the Sabbath. He had attended a church on Sunday since he was a small child, and he continued to go to make his father happy. But after he had enrolled in the Adventist school, he also had started to go to the Adventist church on Sabbath.

In the dream, Erickson was standing in his father's church during a worship service. Suddenly, statues of saints that lined the walls of the church began to move. Their arms moved, and their legs moved.

Story Tips

- Show Costa Rica and Guatemala on the map.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Inter-American Division: bit.ly/iad-2024.
- Know that the Thirteenth Sabbath project to open a center of influence for troubled children in Costa Rica seeks to fulfill the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, "To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults," and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, "To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Before 13th Sabbath

- Remind everyone that their mission offerings are gifts to spread God's Word around the world and that one-fourth of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help six projects in the Inter-American Division. The projects are listed on page 3 and on the back cover.
- The narrator doesn't need to memorize the story, but he or she should be familiar enough with the material so as not to have to read it. Alternatively, children and adults can act out the story.
- Before or after the story, use a map to show the countries in the Inter-American Division — Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, and Mexico — that will receive the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. You can download a mission map with the projects on Facebook at bit.ly/fb-mq.

Laughing, they chased the terrified boy around the church. Erickson could see other worshippers in the church, but they acted like nothing was out of the normal.

Abruptly, Erickson saw a familiar bright but soft light at the door of the church. It was the same light that he had seen in his bedroom several months earlier.

Erickson felt relieved. He sensed Jesus was near and that help was on the way.

Then the being who had prayed in Erickson's room emerged from the light at the church door. He took the boy by the hand and led him out of the church. Again, the boy could see arms, legs, a body, and a head, but he couldn't make out the facial features.

Once outside, the being stood between Erickson and the church. He didn't say a single word. Instead, he pointed a finger toward the church and then shook it, cautioning the boy not to worship there anymore.

The next morning, Erickson didn't tell Mother about the dream. He was afraid that she would tell Father. Father wanted him to become a priest, and he was afraid of Father's reaction.

But after the dream, Erickson never worshipped again on Sunday. He sensed that Jesus was guiding him on a path of righteousness, and he wanted to follow Him. Father, who only went to church on Christmas and Easter, never asked the boy to go back to his church.

About a year after the dream, Erickson decided to give his heart to Jesus and get baptized. He was 13 when he joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Today, Erickson Bala is a pastor and church leader who oversees mission outreach in his homeland of Costa Rica. He decided to break his silence about his past as

Fast Facts

- Nearly 90 percent of the butterfly species of Central America can be found in Costa Rica. The country is home to about 18 percent of the world's butterflies.
- In 2012, the Costa Rican government gave special recognition to Calypso music as part of the country's cultural and historical identity.
- Rice and beans are included in nearly every Costa Rican meal, especially breakfast. The national dish of Costa Rica is gallo pinto, which means "spotted rooster," and consists of rice and beans stir-fried together in a pan to create a speckled appearance.

a reminder this Thirteenth Sabbath that God is active in mission in the Inter-American Division, which includes Costa Rica and Guatemala. He especially wants people to know that God is actively seeking the hearts of children and young people, including those who will be impacted by today's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Part of the offering will help open a center of influence to share Jesus' love with at-risk children in Costa Rica. Other Thirteenth Sabbath projects include two centers of influence to reach at-risk children in Colombia, two centers of influence to reach upper-class people in Mexico, and the construction of a large elementary school in Dominica. Thank you for your generous offering today.

By Andrew McChesney

Future 13th Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will support three projects in the North American Division:

- Center of influence for Alaska Natives, Bethel, Alaska, U.S.A.
- Urban life center and church plant, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.
- Mission outreach for 2025 General Conference Session, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.