



DEDICATED FOR MINISTRY



Dr. Leonard and Rita Westphal work for 3ABN out of their office in Loma Linda, California. (See address information in sidebar, p. 47.)

he sun was hot the day and legs seemed paralyzed.”

Leonard Westphal and Panic struck him. He could taste the dirt in his mouth as he toward the creek. They had big tried to catch his breath, six feet of plans! “We were building a cave- wet soil pressing the life out of his home of our very own — a place body. Then he passed out. we could stash our treasures, and Miraculously, his friend had where our parents could never, only been buried up to his neck. ever find us!” he says, thinking Trapped in the heavy dirt, José back on those early days. began to scream for help, and

Digging into the soft, sandy his mother heard him and came soil along the creek bank, they running from a quarter of a mile away! Later she said she “felt” him calling her; more than she heard him — as many mothers experi- ence when their children are in terrible danger!

“THE DEVIL HAD COME WITHIN A HAIRBREADTH OF CLAIMING MY SOUL,” HE SAYS, “BUT I AGAIN REPLAYED MY MOTHER’S WORDS, ‘YOU WILL NOT KILL MY SON!’” José told her that Leonard was buried, and she began frantically digging. Despite being buried for over 10 minutes, miraculously he revived! Approaching his house, Leonard’s mother rushed out to meet him. “What happened?” she demanded. As they explained, she clutched his muddy body close and kept repeating, “You will not kill my son, you will

hollowed out a space big enough for them to fit completely inside, but as they pushed out the last of the dirt, tragedy struck! “Like a rush of a giant wave, everything went black” he recalls. “I tried to scream, but no sound would come out of my mouth! I reached toward what had once been the opening of my cave, but my arms

not kill my son!” Leonard was frightened by her words, but she explained, “I’m talking to the devil!” as she streaked his mud-covered face with her tears.

Leonard grew up in Brazil in a family of German ancestry who had joined the Seventh-day Adventist church many years before. While attending college he began selling Christian literature to pay for tuition. His ingenuity soon led him to a unique way of selling his books by mak-

ing them available to the armed forces, police, and firefighter departments by arranging payroll deductions.

He met and married his wife, Marice, and just a few years later they came to the United States, where he learned English and got his college degree in theology. Then Leonard began working for the State Department as a translator, but despite the well-paying job, he knew his heart was in ministry. A short time later

he enrolled in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he worked on a dairy farm to help pay his bills.

Then Satan tried again to take his life. “I was coming home one night in the snow, and I felt my truck sliding out of control on a hill,” he recalls. “The next thing I knew I came to in the snow, with no shoes or shirt, wondering where my truck was!” Realizing his truck was the crumpled heap at the bottom of the creek bed, he limped back to the dairy and was rushed to the hospital. “I remember I kept saying that my angel had thrown me from the pickup, but the doctor, finding only a scratch on my back, replied, ‘Next time you have a chance, tell your angel to get a manicure — otherwise you would have come out without a scratch!’”

After graduating with a masters degree, Leonard and Marice began a long and fruitful ministry in various churches across the U.S. He also earned his doctor of ministry degree in pastoral care and psychology from Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts.

Then, in the prime of their ministry, Leonard was called to work for the local church conference as the leader of their Trust Services department. At first he felt hurt. Had he not been a good minister? Why would they want him to stop preaching, and how could he endure an office job? Always a soul-winner, Leonard soon devised a way where he could preach and still perform his new duties. He began offering to preach in churches as a way of being introduced to those who may wish to talk to him about Trust Services. And true to his style, Leonard invariably would make an altar call which led many more precious souls to salvation.

His career took him to the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry’s Trust Services department, and he became close friends with their speaker, H.M.S. Richards, Jr. He was privileged to translate for him in Brazil as 30,000 people flocked to a stadium to hear the gospel preached.

Still riding high on the emotion of this event, Leonard returned to the U.S. to discover that Satan had stricken his beautiful wife with cancer. After months of prayer and medical care, he and his children gathered around her, hoping for a miracle of healing

but watching her life ebb away. When she died Leonard’s faith was shaken. Numb with grief, he decided to visit a different church one Sabbath, and when the pastor called those with special prayer needs to come, he felt himself drawn to the front. “I fell down before the altar and listened to the prayers of the people,” he says. “I prayed for understanding, and somehow the words ‘Blessed Hope’ began to pierce my bedeviled mind. Death was not the end — not in God’s book. Death was but a prelude to eternity — a rest before the climb to glory!”

“The devil had come within a hairbreadth of claiming my soul,” he says, “but I again replayed my mother’s words, ‘You will *not* kill my son!’”

In 1993 Leonard met May Chung, a philanthropist and 3ABN board member who encouraged him to work with 3ABN in Trust Services. Three years later he decided to see 3ABN for himself, met Danny Shelton, and had the opportunity to talk to many of the staff. “The self-sacrificing employees and volunteers touched my heart and inspired me,” he says. Then he heard the unmistakable voice of God again. “This is God’s work, a voice from heaven told me, ‘You must join it.’” When he was offered a position he accepted it on the spot!

Leonard began developing 3ABN’s Stewardship and Trust Services department. Always the “people person,” he visited many hundreds of 3ABN supporters, carefully explaining the different options we could offer. The Lord then brought another lovely lady into his life. The more he talked to Rita, the more they knew that the Lord had brought them together, and they married in 1998.

“Rita and I feel so privileged to work for the Lord and for the saving of souls through this wonderful ministry,” he says. “Through their efforts, many thousands of supporters have been able to share their resources through wills, revocable trusts, charitable remainder trusts, Unitrusts, and estate planning. And looking back over his 28-year career working with wills and trusts, Leonard believes that all the experiences of the past prepared him to work with 3ABN’s ministry today! ■

Editor’s Note: Much of this story was based on Leonard Westphal’s new book entitled *You Will Not Kill My Son*.