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December 12, 2020

THE ISOLATED TITHER

What happens if conditions for the regular “assembling of ourselves” in the church (Heb. 10:24, 25) are less than ideal? How can someone stay faithful and remain spiritually strong if isolated from their local church?

An interesting example is the story of Meropi Gjika, an Albanian woman. Evangelized by Daniel Lewis, an Albanian-born missionary from the United States, Meropi accepted the Adventist truth during the 1940s. For some reason, however, she was not immediately baptized. Then, at the end of World War II, when a communist regime was installed in Albania, all Christian churches were banned and Lewis was arrested. So, Meropi was isolated from the larger Adventist community for almost 50 years! Finally, in 1991, she was found by Ray Dabrowski from the General Conference, who visited Albania after the government lifted some of the religious restrictions.

Meropi told Dabrowski that she had three great desires: first, to be baptized; second, to hand over to the church the tithe and offerings that she had set aside from her small income for 46 years; and third, to see an Adventist church building in her country (ANN, Feb. 19, 2001). Only the first two were fulfilled before her death on February 17, 2001, at the age of 97.

Was Meropi foolish for keeping that money for so long, resulting in its value being eroded by a 46-year inflation? Could she not have used those funds to help the needy or even to support lay evangelists in a country ravaged by poverty?

Apparently, Lewis had faithfully taught Meropi solid biblical principles when he gave her Bible studies, and she learned them well. She was actually practicing what the Bible teaches on this subject: the portion of our income that is considered tithe (1) must represent the right percentage (10 percent; the Heb. word *maaser* means “a tenth”); (2) must be delivered to the storehouse (Deut. 12, 14; 2 Chron. 31; Mal. 3:8-10); (3) must be applied according to God’s prescription—the support of the authorized ministry (Lev. 18:21, 24); and (4) must be equally distributed among the authorized ministry (Deut. 18:1-8; Neh. 13:8-14).

APPEAL: Tithing is an act of submission to the God who established it, and who gave specific directions about how to deliver and distribute it.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help us to accept Your guidance in this matter! Amen!