

## The Vision that Helped a Reluctant Preacher

Becoming an Adventist minister in the early 1850s (more than 160 years ago!) was a serious and difficult thing. Ministers got no regular pay for their work. They had to support themselves and their families by farming or working at some trade. Sometimes people would give them some food or even money, but not often.

When John Loughborough (pronounced LUFF-burrow) began to believe that God wanted him to join the ministry of the Sabbathkeeping Adventists, he hesitated. He wanted to save enough money to support his wife. Before he had accepted the Sabbath and the advent faith, he had sold locks for windows. But now it seemed that no matter how hard he tried, he could not make his business succeed. Although builders admitted that they needed locks for the windows in their buildings, they didn't buy any from him. He was becoming desperate. Yet as his income vanished, the feeling grew that he should enter the ministry. But how would he and his wife live then, when income from preaching was so uncertain?

By the middle of December, 1852, all he had left was one coin, worth three cents! Even though money then would buy much more than it does today, this was almost nothing. As he attended the Sabbath meeting of believers at the home of James and Ellen White, it seemed that a cloud of gloom hung over everyone there. Someone suggested that they should pray, and maybe this would remove the strange feeling. During prayer, Ellen White had a vision. When she came out of it, she explained that the reason for the gloomy feeling they all felt was that John Loughborough was resisting doing what God was calling him to do. God had given her that vision so that she could make a special appeal to him. "He is resisting the conviction of duty," she said. "God wants him to devote himself completely to preaching."

When he went home that day after the meeting, John did some serious thinking and praying. He struggled with God over his problem. He couldn't see how to support himself as a minister, but he was afraid of resisting God's will for his life. After wrestling with this conflict in his mind, he finally made his decision. He would go and preach, confident that God would open the way. When he made that decision, his tension relaxed, and peace filled his mind.

Monday morning his wife came to him for some shopping money, not knowing that he had only three cents left. "John," she asked, "can you let me have some money? We're out of matches, and I also need some thread from town."

Reaching into his pocket for the tiny silver coin, he handed it to her. "Here's a three-cent piece. It's all I have. Get a penny's worth of matches, some thread, and bring me back the other cent. I want to have a little money in my pocket." Then he said, "You know, Mary, I can't seem to make my business succeed no matter how hard I try. I don't understand it."

His wife burst into tears when she heard how poor they were. "John, what are we going to do?" she asked.

“I am going to preach our message.”

“But if you do, how will we live?”

“I don’t know, but God does. As soon as I made my decision, I felt an assurance that God would take care of us.”

Mary didn’t share his faith, and she ran into the bedroom, threw herself down on the bed, and cried for an hour. Then she got up, washed her face, and walked to the village to buy her things. John continued studying the message he would be preaching to others. A little later, someone knocked on the door.

“Are you John Loughborough, the lock salesman?” the stranger asked when John opened the door. John nodded. “I’m from Middleport, about 40 miles up the Erie Canal,” the man continued. Loughborough invited him inside.

The man explained that his health had been poor recently, and he was going to move farther west for a better climate. “I want to take along some kind of business to meet expenses as I travel to find a new home. Someone suggested I try selling locks, and another man recommended I contact you to get some of Mr. Arnold’s patented window locks. Eighty dollars’ worth would last me for a while. Pick out an assortment, and I’ll come tomorrow and pick them up and pay for them.”

John was thrilled. It was only a half mile to the factory, and for walking there to pick up the locks, he earned profit of 26 dollars, which would be like many hundreds of dollars today. The man himself could have gone that extra half mile, but he didn’t. He stopped to buy the locks from John Loughborough.

Mary came home a little later and found her husband in a cheerful mood. He told her about the sale, and the amazing story of the man who traveled 40 miles (64 km) to come to him instead of going on a little farther to the factory. Again Mary went to the bedroom to cry, but this time it was from joy and gratefulness.

The next Sabbath the Adventist believers in that region held a general religious meeting. Again Mrs. White received a vision. She was shown that Loughborough was correct in giving himself to the work of the ministry. He continued in the active ministry for nearly 60 years, and he wrote books and articles that helped people put their faith in God. He even helped the church discover and practice tithe-paying, which supports the ministers! He accomplished much for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but without Mrs. White’s influence he might never have become a minister. He was never sorry that he had trusted God back then, and that he had obeyed God’s messenger who urged him to follow God.

Adapted from *Angel Over Her Tent and Other Stories about Ellen G. White*, by D. A. Delafield and Gerald Wheeler (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1969), pp. 33-38.