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### Bravery in the Face of Opposition

Denis Kaiser

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# Bravery in the Face of Opposition



▲ DENIS KAISER

HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT MANY PEOPLE SITTING RIGHT NEXT TO YOU IN CHURCH MAY HAVE THE MOST AMAZING STORY TO TELL OF HOW THEY FOUND JESUS? AND YET, WHY DO WE NEVER ASK THEM? I BELIEVE THAT MANY WOULD LOVE TO TELL THEIR STORY, AND WE WOULD BE AMAZED WHAT GOD HAS WROUGHT IN THEIR LIVES.

A couple years ago, I read a letter that Ellen White sent to her three sons, Henry, Edson and Willie, in March 1861 (Lt 3, 1861). In her letter, she devoted almost an entire paragraph to the story of Maria Perry West (age 39) and her husband Charles H. West (age 40), a couple from Lisbon, Iowa, who she had met at a conference in nearby Marion, Iowa. A year earlier Ellen and James White had visited Lisbon and convinced Maria, then a Universalist believer, of the biblical foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist message. Maria decided to join the church although “her husband opposed her much.” Ellen White noted that at one point, he, “while intoxicated [with alcohol], presented to her head a loaded pistol, but the Lord has kept her from being harmed.” Maria continued to follow her conviction and it appears her example had a positive influence on her husband. By February 1861, “this violent man was thoroughly converted.” His appetite for liquor had disappeared and “his bloated appearance ha[d] changed.” He looked “like a quiet, pleasant man” now.

Maria remained “a firm believer in the third angel’s message” and a faithful member of the church until her death in 1895, yet her husband Charles apparently never fully joined her faith. They separated in the summer of 1870, and while the four older children (all teenagers) appeared to stay with him, she cared for the two younger children (below the age of 10). Maybe some looked at her as

a single mother without a life or story of her own. Although Maria and Charles were buried in different places, her gravestone states that she had been the “wife of C.H. West.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, there is far more about their story that we can no longer uncover, yet Ellen White’s report to her sons preserved a piece of Maria’s bravery and unyielding faith.

We may sometimes look at those around us, unintentionally presuming we know everything there is to know about them. Examples like the above show me, however, that there is more to know. Next time we may ask them, “How did you find Jesus?” ■

1. F.J. Dunn, “Obituary: Maria P. West,” *Review and Herald*, May 7, 1895, 303; 1860, 1870 and 1880, U.S. censuses and cemetery records for Charles West and Maria West.

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