



Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.

NOVEMBER 27, 2021

Joe and Susan put God First

Joe and Susan decided to put God first despite their fear and uncertainty about the future. What can we learn from their story today that will help us put God first in our own lives?

Joe is an IT manager in Silver Spring, Maryland. Parking at home after a weekend camping trip, Joe Marcellino saw a trail of oil going up the street from his Isuzu Trooper SUV. Joe called his friend Eric for help.

Eric found the oil had spewed from the oil filter's rubber gasket and warned that the engine had probably sustained significant damage. He estimated that repairs could cost more than US\$3000.

Recently married, Joe and Susan had about \$3000 in the bank. But Joe was reluctant to spend the money on the SUV because the couple had fallen behind in returning tithe and owed about \$1500 for the past three months.

Susan saw no room for discussion. "We need to give our first fruits," she said. Joe and Susan prayed and decided to return tithe rather than repair the SUV.

After this decision, Eric contacted Joe and advised him to contact the gas station that had changed his oil shortly before the camping trip. The gas station sent a mechanic to Joe's house and, after an inspection, took responsibility for the damaged engine. The gas station's insurance paid them \$3000.

When the repairs were finished, Joe received the bill from

his mechanic for \$1500. To his surprise, the \$3000 from the gas station's insurance had been enough to cover the cost of the repairs and his tithe. Joe and Susan are certain that putting God first will lead to miraculous and unexpected results.

The next miracle was selling the same car. Within a week, Joe was approached by Wayne, the purchasing director at the Adventist Church headquarters. Wayne asked Joe whether he would be willing to sell the SUV.

"A missionary in Africa has asked specifically to buy an Isuzu Trooper," he said. "Are you willing to sell it?" He gave Joe a fair price and had the vehicle shipped to Africa. Seeing Joe's concerns, he promised to keep him posted on what happened to the SUV. The vehicle had 40,000 miles (about 64,000 kilometres) at the time of the sale. After about 18 months had gone by, Wayne shared with Joe the SUV had done more than 100,000 miles (about 160,000 kilometres). A few years later, Wayne said the SUV had passed 300,000 miles (about 480,000 kilometres).

"It is the Lord who kept it going for this missionary!" Joe said. Now 61, Joe said the experience taught him an important lesson about mission and the importance of returning tithe first.

Joe and Susan put God first. Their faith inspires us today. Jesus gave up everything to redeem us and His love compels us to put His kingdom first in our own lives. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, we are challenged to put God first.