Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.

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Living the Dream

COLLEGE PROFESSORS: WIDENING YOUR WORLDVIEW
College professors: A Call deferred
Tenneson was a free-spirited hippie, he long, scrappy hair. His hands and bearded face were covered in soot from the forest fire he had been fighting. Normally not self-conscious, he found himself analyzing everything he wore. The love beads that dangled from his neck seemed inappropriate. His pants were ripped and tattered, and his shirt was stained with perspiration and mud. For a second, he contemplated turning back, but his nagging curiosity wouldn’t let him.

He made his way across the parking lot toward the hilltop church that sat on the edge of John Day, a tiny town in eastern Oregon. He moved swiftly into the sanctuary looking for his wife, Cheryl, who had begun attending the church a few months earlier.

But the first person to make eye contact with him was the pianist. With their eyes meeting she stopped playing and for a moment he regretted stepping foot in the place.

“You must be Mike,” she said leaving her bench. “We’re so glad you’re here.”

The greeting took him by surprise and disarmed any skepticism or doubt he had carried with him. Though the pastor was a tough-as-nails cowboy — as were many of the worshippers — and Tenneson was a free-spirited hippie, he felt unusually at peace in the foreign environs of a church.

“My heart broke,” admits Tenneson, 46, now a biology professor at Evangel University, as we sit in his office. “They offered open fellowship and genuine caring love. Through their actions they showed me what an abundant life it is to follow the Lord.”

Tenneson’s face is unusually tan for early spring. The tan is a mark of hard work and a souvenir of sorts from a medical-missions trip he and nine of his students recently took to Belize with a team of medical professionals.

While serving in the Peace Corps in the early 1980s, Mike and Cheryl felt called to full-time missions ministry. To that end, they moved to Springfield, Mo., where he enrolled at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and took a teaching position at Evangel to pay the bills. The move would prove to be a demerit of their calling to the mission field.

“Through a long series of arguments with God,” says Tenneson, “He convinced me that it was His will that I stay at Evangel rather than become a missionary.

“Tenneson's motto: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23)."