

# University Home.

by Gareth Evans

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*Gareth Evans shares his journey of faith and the divine connections that led him to find a new home and family while attending Swansea University.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:23, Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 16:9, Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "God's Providence", "Divine Guidance"

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## Description

Gareth Evans shares a powerful testimony of how God orchestrated every detail of his journey to Swansea University, from meeting a fellow believer at a cricket game to finding a home through divine connections. Despite initial preferences for other universities, God's hand guided Gareth to Swansea, where he found a new family and excelled academically, all through what seemed like a series of coincidences but were truly God's perfect plan unfolding in his life.

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## Transcript

It was the summer of 1956 and I had been a believer just one year. I now attended the Elim Pentecostal church in Bridgend and proudly wore an Elim Crusaders badge on my school blazer lapel.

Swansea Grammar School were visiting my school to play cricket and I was among the many spectators enthralled by the duel on the pitch as the visitors struggled against our bowlers. Just then, a visiting player came alongside me and spoke. "I see you are wearing a Crusaders badge," he said. "I also attend Elim Crusaders in Swansea. Are you a believer?" When I answered, he introduced himself as Don Evans and invited me to stroll around the cricket ground with him.

We talked about our faith in the Lord and he encouraged me greatly. At the other side of the field, we were passing the gate when my Latin teacher entered. He was a selector for the Welsh schoolboys cricket team and, evidently, my new friend was well known to him. He also knew me well as one of his least able Latin students! His question however, was rather strange seeing that he must have realised we attended different schools thirty miles apart.

"Hello Don, hello Gareth. Are you two brothers?" Without hesitation, Don replied. "Yes, sir, brothers in the Lord!" I gulped. It was the first time I had heard anyone openly witness of his faith.

I enjoyed that time with Don and it was with some sadness that I said farewell at the end of the game.

A year later I was sitting my final school exams and hoping to pass with sufficiently high grades to enter university. I had presented my selection of universities to the Education Board and had been interviewed at each of them. All had approved my entrance, conditional upon my achieving a sufficiently high grade in my subjects, Physics, Pure Maths and Applied Maths.

My preference list was firm, firstly Birmingham University followed by Cardiff, Swansea and Aberystwyth in order. When the results were published I was thrilled to discover I had achieved all the grades required by any of these universities, so was able to make my choice as to the one I would attend. However, I found a strange attitude change within me. Birmingham seemed less attractive now that I could make that my choice - it was 'too industrial'. Cardiff was 'too near home'. "I think I'll go to Swansea!"

Thus it was that I wrote a letter to the pastor of the Elim church in Swansea, asking if he knew anyone in his church who had 'digs' for a student due to arrive in September. Maybe I was a little naive in patiently waiting for his reply, but I was suddenly shaken into action when a letter arrived from the Welsh Education Board concerning the grant they were to give me, sufficient to pay for my tuition and accommodation.

"Mr Evans, we have your cheque ready for remitting to you, but we cannot send it until you inform us of your address while attending Swansea University. The deadline date for us to know your address is \*\*\*." It was the following Wednesday, just five days away!

The next morning I was on a bus to Swansea. It is hard to believe that, though Swansea was only thirty miles from my home, I had never been there except for my interview. I entered a telephone kiosk near the bus terminal, hoping to find the number and address for the Elim church, but to no avail.

I must have looked rather despondent, for two young women looked on me with pity and then asked what I was seeking. They happened to be believers (coincidence?) and told me that there was no office at the church, and that the pastor lived some distance out of the city. They directed me to his home, indicating which local bus I should catch and where I should alight. Finally, I arrived at the pastor's address and apprehensively rang the bell.

Pastor Cole welcomed me into his home, but apologised that he had not followed up on my letter. "I wrote out a list of nine women" he said, "but I have not approached any of them yet." My heart sank!

After a quick cup of tea, we drove back into Swansea to visit the first of the ladies on his list, but, as we passed the University, he suddenly turned down a narrow lane. "I've just remembered that there is a lady here who has twin boys. One is about to start university with you, and the other is leaving for Bible School in London. Maybe she will let you have that son's bedroom." This lady was not on his list!

I thought it hardly likely that any mother would allow a stranger to take the place of one of her twins, so I sat in the car with little expectation as the pastor entered the house.

He returned a little while later. "She's not really willing but would like to meet you," he said. I followed him into the home. She told me of her apprehension and asked me about my Christian belief, ending her conversation with me by turning to the pastor and saying, "I'll have to ask the boys."

Of course she didn't know that I had no time for her to 'ask the boys' as I needed to know today where I would be staying, or I would not be staying anywhere in Swansea that year!.

"Where are the boys, Mrs Evans?" asked the pastor. "Russell has gone to the university and Don has just gone to the store," she answered. The names leapt out at me. "Evans, Don Evans?" I said. "I know Don Evans!" With that the front door opened and one of the twins entered the room. It was my friend of a year earlier. He stared at me and then said, "Gareth, what are you doing here?" Without waiting for a reply he turned to his mother exclaiming, "Mum, this is the boy I told you about last year when we played cricket in Cowbridge!"

As Don hugged me I looked over his shoulder and saw his mum holding out her hands to me as well. I had found my new home - and a new mother to replace the one who had died when I was thirteen years old.

Aunty Mary and Uncle Aubrey, as I called them, became close to me and truly made me part of their family. Russell, now professor of Metallurgy at Swansea, was a major reason why I obtained an Upper Honours degree in Physics, far better than I, or any of my secondary school teachers, had ever anticipated for me. Don is still a dear friend, godfather to my eldest daughter and professor of Medical Ethics at Dunedin University, New Zealand.

Swansea is a large city but the Lord led me directly to the only person I knew in that city. When I was planning to go to Birmingham University, He had already planned the way for me to Swansea.

Coincidence? - I think not!

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