



2016  
PLANBOOK



REACH THE WORLD

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HEALTHY  
FAMILIES FOR  
ETERNITY

— WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER —



REACH THE WORLD

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# HEALTHY FAMILIES FOR ETERNITY

— WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER —

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*Revival and Reformation: Families Reaching Out*  
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# Preface

Solomon, through inspiration, offers a collection of wise sayings for people interested in living a life without regrets and unnecessary pain. He counsels: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.” Proverbs 1:8-10 (ESV)

Parents are responsible for the guidance and moral instruction of their children, leading to a prodigious quality of life. When Solomon admonishes the disciple to *hear*, he is suggesting the need for taking heed to the counsel being given. Not only is the father to be listened to—but also the mother—whose teaching is from her faithfulness to the Word of God.

The theme for this year is ***Healthy Families for Eternity***. This multifaceted notion can only become effective in the families of the church, as we train our children to live based on the teachings that God has provided since the beginning of time. Only by choosing to live faithfully will we be able to enjoy the kind of relational health that honors God, and at once prepares us for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Requisite for parents to be most influential in the relational and spiritual health of their children is that they enjoy a relatively healthy marriage. Should parents not be married to each other,

having a robust and working relationship with the person they are co-parenting with, and a viable and intimate relationship with God are essentials for creating a place for healthy and dynamic discipleship to germinate.

Referencing the kind of atmosphere that makes for healthy relationships within the home and prepares a family for the coming of Jesus Christ, Ellen White states in *The Adventist Home*: “The sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides. If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence”. (Chapter 1, p. 15).

It is our sincere desire that the families in our churches around the world will become centers of discipleship and hope. Where the fruit of the Spirit is the practice of each day—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a); as we trust God to keep us ready until the day He comes for us.

For stronger and healthier families,

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# How to Use This Planbook

The Family Ministries Planbook is an annual resource organized by the General Conference Family Ministries department with input from the world field. It is to be used as a tool in local churches around the world and includes resources for the special family emphases weeks and Sabbaths.

## **Family Togetherness Week: September 4-10**

Family Togetherness Week is scheduled from Sunday September 4 and ends on the following Sabbath September 10 with Family Togetherness Day. Family Togetherness Week and Family Togetherness Day highlight celebrating the church as a family.

## **Family Togetherness Day: Sabbath, September 10 (Emphasizes the Church Family)**

Use the Family Sermon for the worship service and the Family Seminar for a Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon and/or Saturday night program.

Within this planbook you will find sermons, seminars, children's stories as well as leadership resources, reprinted articles and book reviews to help facilitate these special days and other programs you may want to implement during the year. In Appendix A you will find useful information that will assist you in implementing family ministries in your local church.

This resource also includes a disc with Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations of the seminars. Seminar facilitators are encouraged to personalize the Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations with their own personal stories and pictures that reflect the diversity of their various communities.

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## **Christian Home and Marriage Week: February 13-20**

Christian Home and Marriage Week occurs in February embracing two Sabbaths: Christian Marriage Day that emphasizes Christian marriage and Christian Home Day that emphasizes parenting. Christian Home and Marriage Week begins on the second Sabbath and ends on the third Sabbath in February.

## **Christian Marriage Day: Sabbath, February 13, (Emphasizes Marriage)**

Use the Marriage Sermon for worship service and the Marriage Seminar during a Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon or Saturday night program.

## **Christian Home Day: Sabbath, February 20, (Emphasizes Parenting)**

Use the Parenting Sermon for worship service and the Parenting Seminar during a Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon or Saturday night program.

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# SERMONS

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# Christian Marriage and the Cross

ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER

## The Text

THEN HE SAID TO THEM ALL,  
“IF ANYONE DESIRES TO COME AFTER  
ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND  
TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY, AND  
FOLLOW ME. FOR WHOEVER DESIRES  
TO SAVE HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, BUT  
WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY  
SAKE WILL SAVE IT.  
LUKE 9:23-24

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## Introduction

We enjoy food! People frequently ask us what we do about eating when our frequent ministry travel takes us to different parts of the world. Our answer is often the same, we like all kinds of foods.

Over the years we have developed an appreciation for foods from all over the world, and welcome the opportunity to taste diverse cuisines on each of our travel itineraries. Indian, Latin American, Italian, Caribbean, Mexican, Thai, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, East African, West African, Southern African, Russian, Middle Eastern, American and Eastern European dishes. We enjoy them all.

.....

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The biggest challenge with food, however, is when we get home from a trip. What should we eat and where? Shall we go to an Indian, Cuban or Thai restaurant or should we eat at home? Deciding whose palate to satisfy has everything to do with the quality of our marriage at that time.

Our sermon today is titled Christian Marriage and the Cross. Let us pray.

## The life of self denial

Luke 9:23-24, records the following poignant words of Jesus: “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.’”

The context of Luke 9 finds Jesus with His disciples dispensing power over demons and diseases, sending them to preach the good news of the gospel, listening to their exciting mission experiences, then performing a miraculous feeding of five thousand on the outskirts of the city of Bethsaida.

After an interlude for prayer, Jesus resumes the conversation with His disciples, asking for a report on what people were saying about Him, apparently triggered by Herod the Tetrarch’s inquiry earlier in the chapter. Some people proposed that Jesus was John the Baptist who

had risen from the dead, while others suggested he could be Elijah. Jesus, however, was really interested to know who the disciples thought He was and what they were saying about Him. In response to the question posed by Jesus, Peter answers: “The Christ of God.”

The conversation between disciples and Master transitions into a reality check about the reasons Jesus came to earth. More importantly, this dialog was about making clear that the power the disciples had received from Jesus and witnessed in amazing splendor at the feeding of the large multitude, was not for personal gain or prestige; it served to convey to lost humanity that God is on their side and is infinitely concerned about their daily cares. Beyond this, the purpose of Jesus’ coming was ultimately to suffer and die to make this preferred life possible, and as disciples of His, their lot would be the same.

### Challenges in marriage

Marriage looms prominent in Scripture. In the book of Genesis, marriage appears as the first institution established by God at creation between one man and one woman; and in the book of Revelation marriage is used as a metaphor to describe the relationship between God and His people. The second chapter of the gospel of John finds Jesus performing His first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. The fact that marriage appears at the end of the creation week, suggests God’s ideal for the human race. And now a marriage ceremony prominently placed at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry underscores heaven’s regard for this institution.

One of the principal challenges in marriage is that God meant for this relationship to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman. In Genesis 2:24 the Bible states: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” In a discussion with the Pharisees about the possibility of divorce, Jesus quotes Genesis 2 when He states in Matthew 19:4-6:

“AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM, ‘HAVE YOU NOT READ THAT HE WHO MADE THEM AT THE BEGINNING MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, AND SAID, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH? SO THEN, THEY ARE NO LONGER TWO BUT ONE FLESH. THEREFORE WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE.’”

What is it that makes marriage challenging? Why the preoccupation with divorce? So many relationships that begin with great excitement and euphoria, so much so that the parties feel emotional pain when they are apart from each other, seem to fizzle within a few weeks, months or years after the wedding day.

Not long ago we received a question from a man for one of the magazine columns we write. The question included in our book *Real Family Talk*<sup>1</sup>, is the following:

“I NEVER THOUGHT THIS WOULD HAPPEN TO ME, BUT I FIND MYSELF VERY UNHAPPY IN MY MARRIAGE. MY WIFE AND I JUST DON’T COMMUNICATE WELL, AND WHEN WE DO, WE YELL AT EACH OTHER AND THERE IS A LOT OF TENSION BETWEEN US. WE DON’T SEEM TO BE COMPATIBLE AND HAVE VERY FEW INTERESTS IN COMMON. HOW CAN SUCH A DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP SURVIVE? THIS CANNOT POSSIBLY BE HEALTHY FOR OUR CHILDREN. I DON’T BELIEVE GOD EXPECTS ME TO STAY IN SUCH AN UNHAPPY RELATIONSHIP. WHAT DO YOU THINK?”

Interesting question, isn’t it? And one that many married people are asking out loud and sometimes in silence. What happened, we ask, to the excitement and closeness that was so overt before marriage, that was often a little embarrassing to family and friends when the two people in love were almost literally suffocating each other at the dinner table.

What happened is that when people are dating (courting in many parts of the world) opposites attract. On the other hand, in marriage opposites tend to repel. This is what makes marriage so challenging. As sinners, we are inherently selfish. We are in love with our own opinions and want everything to go our way. The Bible states in Isaiah 53:6a: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way...”

And it takes only a few weeks or months after the honeymoon infatuation has finally dissipated, to make the spouses impatient and nasty with each other, everyone turning to his own way.

### Choices in marriage

God created marriage for our happiness and joy. For marriage and other relationships to be sustainable, we must follow the principles given by God. In Galatians 5:22-23 the Bible declares: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Think about it. If these principles (fruit) are operative in our relationships—especially marriage—when there are differences of opinion, tastes, likes and dislikes; practicing bearing the fruit mentioned by Paul, will allow us to handle variances with kindness, gentleness and goodness, rather than anger, roughness and indifference.

No marriage in the Bible is a model marriage. Except for Adam and Eve before the fall, every subsequent human marriage has been imperfect. To have a Christian marriage we must choose to be in a Christian marriage, which is only functional when we employ spiritual values given to us by God in the Bible. Choosing a Christian marriage is like choosing to be a Christian. It is a decision we must make every day, like eating and breathing, to remain healthy and strong. For marriage to remain vibrant and viable, the people in the marriage must regularly nurture their marriage, or soon it will become feeble and die.

Making good choices in marriage is choosing to practice the counsel of Ephesians 5:15-17 that says: “See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Also in Proverbs 1:5 it says: “A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.”

On the realities of marriage and the choices spouses must make to keep their union strong, Ellen G White<sup>2</sup> offers the following:

“AFFECTION MAY BE AS CLEAR AS CRYSTAL AND BEAUTEOUS IN ITS PURITY, YET IT MAY BE SHALLOW BECAUSE IT HAS NOT BEEN TESTED AND TRIED. MAKE CHRIST FIRST AND LAST AND BEST IN EVERYTHING. CONSTANTLY BEHOLD HIM, AND YOUR LOVE FOR HIM WILL DAILY BECOME DEEPER AND STRONGER AS IT IS SUBMITTED TO THE TEST OF TRIAL. AND AS YOUR LOVE FOR HIM INCREASES, YOUR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER WILL GROW DEEPER AND STRONGER.”

### Commitment in marriage

Commitment is at the foundation of every healthy and deeply fulfilling marriage. It is a decision that every married person has to make if he or she is to remain married. Christian marriage in this respect, is not unlike all other marriages that are in it for the long haul. Every person has to decide on their level of commitment, which will be commensurate with their level of marital satisfaction.

Like other relationships in life, marriage also experiences fluctuations. We often say there are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. So, perfection is not synonymous to commitment. However, commitment is *sine qua non* (indispensable) for every viable marital relationship, just like oxygen is needed to keep living.

Noted marriage and family researcher, Scott M Stanley<sup>3</sup> suggests there are two types of commitments: dedication and constraint.

Dedication is like an internalized commitment to a project or a person. It expresses a person's greatest desire and interest in making sure that something happens. On the other hand, constraint is more like an obligation to do something that left undone would be catastrophic. While dedication is like an influence compelling you to go forward, constraint is like a power pushing you from behind.

Dedication is operative in the Apostle Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, declaring:

“LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND. IT DOES NOT ENVY, IT DOES NOT BOAST, IT IS NOT PROUD. IT DOES NOT DISHONOR OTHERS...IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED, IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS. LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH. IT ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS, ALWAYS HOPES, ALWAYS PERSEVERES. LOVE NEVER FAILS...” (NIV)

Every marriage relationship needs both dedication and constraint commitment; the higher the level of dedication in the relationship, the higher the level of satisfaction will be as well. In those moments when dedication is low, constraint commitment will enable couples to make it through the dark valleys that often affect marriage relationships. However, each person in the marriage needs to be committed to regaining dedication commitment as quickly as possible, so that marriage can be, as Ellen White suggests, “a little heaven upon earth...”<sup>4</sup>

## Conclusion

We both enjoy food! And while we are intentional about being temperate not only about what we eat, but how much we eat, it is also true that we relish certain foods more than others and eat them with greater frequency.

Deciding where we will eat—what kind of food that is—after being on the road

for several days and finally getting home, determines to a great extent the quality of our marriage at that particular time. This is the test, to a great extent, how well we are practicing what we preach and how close to Jesus we have remained.

The truth is, Christian marriage can only be Christian when like true disciples we take up our cross and follow Jesus in self-denial, self-sacrifice, and being like Him in every way. Being baptized church members is not enough to keep our marriage healthy and strong.

Understanding that to be a disciple means you have signed up to serve rather than to be served; and you are looking for what you can give rather than what you can get, is the secret to having a marriage filled with dedication commitment, that represents Jesus Christ without shame.

A crisis in marriage means there is a spiritual crisis, regardless of how many Bible studies you are involved in or how many people you are leading to baptism. However, when you see your marriage in the light of the cross, you willingly take it up in Christ-like fashion, then you will experience the joy that comes from trusting Jesus to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. This is the kind of marriage that becomes salvific to your spouse, to your children, and to everyone who is within your circle of influence.

As you purpose in your heart to take up your cross today, it is our prayer that your marriage will experience the transformational power that brings joy, peace and love. In the words of John Hugh McNaughton's (1829-1891) song,

### LOVE AT HOME

IN THE COTTAGE THERE IS JOY,  
WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME;  
HATE AND ENVY NE'ER ANNOY,  
WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME;  
ROSES BLOOM BENEATH OUR FEET,  
ALL THE EARTH'S A GARDEN SWEET,  
MAKING LIFE A BLISS COMPLETE,  
WHEN THERE IS LOVE AT HOME.

LOVE BECOMES A WAY OF LIFE,  
WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME;

SWEET, INSISTENT END TO STRIFE,  
 WHEN THERE IS LOVE AT HOME;  
 GLAD SUBMISSION EACH ONE'S GIFT,  
 WILLING PLEDGE TO LOVE AND LIFT,  
 HEALING BALM FOR EVERY RIFT,  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME.

ANGER COOLS AND PRESSURES CEASE,  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME;  
 CHILDREN LEARN TO LIVE IN PEACE,  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME;  
 COURAGE TO REACH OUT IN GRACE,  
 MEET A STRANGER FACE TO FACE,  
 FIND A RECONCILING PLACE,  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME.

THERE'S NO QUESTION YOU CAN'T ASK  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME;  
 THERE IS STRENGTH FOR ANY TASK,  
 WHEN THERE IS LOVE AT HOME;  
 SHARING JOY IN WORK OR PLAY,  
 CONFIDENCE TO FACE THE DAY,

KNOWING LOVE WILL FIND A WAY,  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME.

REFRAIN:

LOVE AT HOME, LOVE AT HOME;  
 KNOWING LOVE WILL FIND A WAY,  
 WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME.

May God bless you to this end is our prayer.

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Oliver, W & E. (2015). *Real family talk: Answers to questions about love, marriage and sex*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, p. 32.
- <sup>2</sup> White, E. G. (1952). *The Adventist home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, p. 105.
- <sup>3</sup> Stanley, S. M. (2005). *The power of commitment: A guide to active, lifelong love*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 23.
- <sup>4</sup> White, E. G. (1952). *The Adventist home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, p. 15.

# God's Plan for Parents and Children

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

## The Text

HEAR, MY SON, AND RECEIVE MY SAYINGS,  
AND THE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE WILL  
BE MANY.  
PROVERBS 4:10

## Introduction

The Bible is like a road map. God gave us this map so we would have good directions and arrive safely at the destination He has prepared for us. That destination, on this earth, is a good, healthy family.

Jesus told us: “I have come that they (you) may have life, and that they (you) may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10) (*emphasis ours*).

God is pleased to see that our family relationships are strong and healthy.

Yet, divorce still happens—even in the church.

Abuse still takes place—even in Adventist congregations.

Parents still face challenges with their children. There are parents who resort to abortion. And

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there are children who suffer from abuse. In some countries children file lawsuits against their parents, and we even read stories of children behaving aggressively toward their parents.

The apostle Paul refers to the condition of the world in the last days. He begins to set the time frame by saying, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

As we read this list, we might identify negative behaviors that define our relational world. “Proud, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unloving, unforgiving, headstrong.”

Isn't this what we see happening in many homes today?

And it is not just in the homes of people who don't know God. It happens in the homes of people who attend church on a regular basis. After Paul writes this list, describing people in the last days, he adds the following words: “Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:5).

He said that religious people, church people, would have these experiences in their midst.

That's why it's important not to be just religious, but spiritual.

A religious person is one who fulfills religious duties; but does so only outwardly. A spiritual person is one who believes from the heart and whose external expression of religion proceeds from inner convictions. And this becomes evident in how we relate to one another as parents and children.

To help us, as spiritual individuals, the Bible provides a number of *Relational Directives*<sup>1</sup>. They are commands intended to help us create a basic framework, a basic pattern for living in relationship with others.

We find these *Relational Directives* scattered throughout the Bible and they can be grouped into several categories. Some are very generic and apply broadly to all relationships. Others are more specifically directed toward people in particular relationships, such as married couples, parents, children, neighbors, or friends.

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A good example of a generic relational directive is the golden rule: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you do also to them for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12).

And there are several directives that apply to how parents and children relate to one another.

Let us consider four of those directives.

### 1. Children, honor your parents.

One of the best-known directives to children comes from the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue. It is found in the second half of the Decalogue, which addresses relationships. The first commandment in this second half says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12).

The apostle Paul makes the interesting comment that this is "the first commandment with a promise." (Ephesians 6:2)

Honor your father and your mother! What does it mean to honor your father and your mother? How do we do that? We honor our father and mother by being respectful in word and action and having an inward attitude of esteem for their position.

The Greek word for honor means "to revere, prize, and value."

[HERE YOU MAY TELL A STORY TO ILLUSTRATE THIS PRINCIPLE]

Again, how do we honor our father and our mother? Solomon, the wisest man, urged children to respect their parents. (Proverbs 1:8; 13:1; 30:17).

Although we may no longer be directly under our parents' authority, we can't outgrow God's command to honor them. Even Jesus, God the Son, submitted Himself to both His earthly parents (Luke 2:51) and His heavenly Father. (Matthew 26:39). We follow Christ's example when we treat our parents the way we would reverentially approach our heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:9; Malachi 1:6).

Honor them with both actions and attitudes (Mark 7:6). Honor their unspoken as well as spoken wishes. "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." (Proverbs 13:1).

Ellen G. White comments about this commandment, "It is binding upon childhood and youth, upon the middle-aged and the aged. There is no period in life when children are excused from honoring their parents. This solemn obligation is binding upon every son and daughter and is one of the conditions to their prolonging their lives upon the land which the Lord will give the faithful." (White, 1952, p. 292).

As pastor Mark Driscoll shared in a sermon, "To honor means to respect, to defer, to submit. It means to have love, appreciation, and affection towards them. Honor is something that begins internally, and then it manifests itself externally. As you have honor in your heart, it comes out in your words." (Kumar, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Children, obey your parents.

The second directive applies to how children should relate to their parents:

“CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD, FOR THIS IS RIGHT”  
EPHESIANS 6:1

[HERE YOU CAN USE A STORY OF OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS]

Parents mean well for their children. They are not being arbitrary when they ask, or tell, their children to do something or when they forbid them from doing something.

Ellen White makes a very important declaration when she writes:

“ONE GREAT REASON WHY THERE IS SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD TODAY IS THAT PARENTS OCCUPY THEIR MINDS WITH OTHER THINGS THAN THAT WHICH IS ALL—IMPORTANT—HOW TO ADAPT THEMSELVES TO THE WORK OF PATIENTLY AND KINDLY TEACHING THEIR CHILDREN THE WAY OF THE LORD. IF THE CURTAIN COULD BE DRAWN ASIDE, WE SHOULD SEE THAT MANY, MANY CHILDREN WHO HAVE GONE ASTRAY HAVE BEEN LOST TO GOOD INFLUENCES THROUGH THIS NEGLECT. PARENTS, CAN YOU AFFORD TO HAVE IT SO IN YOUR EXPERIENCE? YOU SHOULD HAVE NO WORK SO IMPORTANT THAT IT WILL PREVENT YOU FROM GIVING TO YOUR CHILDREN ALL THE TIME THAT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO OBEY AND TRUST THE LORD FULLY.”  
WHITE, 1952

The nature and results of obedience to parents is so important that the Bible lists them. Among them we find:

CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN ALL THINGS, FOR THIS PLEASES THE LORD.  
COLOSSIANS 3:20 (ESV)

CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD, FOR THIS IS RIGHT.  
EPHESIANS 6:1 (ESV)

HEAR, MY SON, YOUR FATHER’S INSTRUCTION, AND FORSAKE NOT YOUR MOTHER’S TEACHING.  
PROVERBS 1:8 (ESV)

The first two directives give us clear guidelines on how children should relate their parents. Honor them, and obey them, are the overarching principles in these two directives.

## 3. Parents, train your children.

But the Bible does not provide directives only in one direction — how children should relate toward their parents. The Bible also has directives to parents so they know how to relate to their children.

The third directive we will consider today is found in the Old Testament.

“TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO, EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.”  
PROVERBS 22:6

This text has brought confusion and misunderstanding to parents at times.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary shares interesting insights:

MANY PARENTS HAVE TAKEN THIS VERSE AS SANCTION FOR FORCING A CHILD TO FOLLOW THE PROFESSION OR TRADE THEY THINK HE OUGHT TO. THUS THEY HAVE BROUGHT SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT UPON THEMSELVES, FOR THE CHILD, ON GROWING UP, OFTEN GOES AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY. THE VERSE RATHER COUNSELS PARENTS TO LEARN THE WAY IN WHICH THEIR PARTICULAR CHILD CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE OF MOST SERVICE TO HIMSELF AND OTHERS, AND IN WHICH HE WILL FIND MOST HAPPINESS. THE SPECIFIC STATION IN LIFE APPOINTED FOR A MAN IS DETERMINED BY HIS CAPABILITIES. TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL GOD HAS ASSIGNED A PLACE IN HIS GREAT PLAN. GOD HAS EQUIPPED MAN WITH THE CAPABILITIES NEEDED TO FILL THIS SPECIAL PLACE. THEREFORE THE CHOICE OF A LIFEWORSHIP SHOULD BE IN LINE WITH THE NATURAL BENT. THE EFFORTS OF

THE PARENTS AND THE CHILD SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARD DISCOVERING THE KIND OF WORK HEAVEN HAS ALREADY DETERMINED. INSPIRATION DECLARES THAT THIS VERSE ENJOINS PARENTS TO “DIRECT, EDUCATE, DEVELOP,” BUT THAT TO DO THIS “THEY MUST THEMSELVES UNDERSTAND THE ‘WAY’ THE CHILD SHOULD GO.”

NICHOL, 1977

Sometimes parents want their children to follow in their footsteps. A teacher wants his son to be a teacher, a lawyer wants her daughter to be a lawyer, a physician wants her son to be a physician, and a carpenter wants his son to be a carpenter. Parents can push their children to be what they had hoped to be but were not able to do.

But in the process, they can be quenching their own children’s dreams and wishes for their future. Because children have different personalities and talents, their interests may not be the same as their parents; they may end up frustrated because they can’t pursue their own interests.

16

As parents we need to understand that our first and most important responsibility is to lead them to God. This must be our focus rather than pushing our children on a specific career path.

The following passage of scripture is the Shema which is recited morning and evening by Jews to the present.

“HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. AND THESE WORDS, WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY, SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU RISE UP.”

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7

The apostle Paul adds: “Fathers... bring them (children) up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4).

Train your child, through your example. Like a train has an engine and the cars follow it, your children will follow you, wherever you lead them, so lead them with a good example.

Train them with patience, tenderness, and lots of love.

Train them with the thought continually before your eyes that their soul is the first thing to be considered.

Train them to have a good knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

Train them to make of prayer a daily habit.

Train them to attend church services regularly and to be engaged in the life and ministry of the church. Train them to support the church with their time, their talents, and with their treasure.

Train them to learn and rely on faith as the key that unlocks heaven’s gates.

Train them to be obedient, to God and to their parents.

Train them to speak truthfully.

Train them to know God, to trust God, to love God, to serve God, to share God, to live for God.

#### **4. Parents, don’t exasperate your children**

In the New Testament we will find the last of the directives we will consider today.

“FATHERS, DO NOT EXASPERATE YOUR CHILDREN, SO THAT THEY WILL NOT LOSE HEART.”

COLOSSIANS 3:21

Paul wrote those words to the church in Colossae, but he also wrote similar words to the church in Ephesus: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4).

In that masterful compilation of Ellen White’s writings about children—Child Guidance—she

makes some very important points about this biblical directive:

Referring to the words used by Paul to the Ephesians, Ellen White gives an example of how a parent provokes her child:

“OFTEN WE DO MORE TO PROVOKE THAN TO WIN. I HAVE SEEN A MOTHER SNATCH FROM THE HAND OF HER CHILD SOMETHING THAT WAS GIVING IT SPECIAL PLEASURE. THE CHILD DID NOT KNOW THE REASON FOR THIS, AND NATURALLY FELT ABUSED. THEN FOLLOWED A QUARREL BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD, AND A SHARP CHASTISEMENT ENDED THE SCENE AS FAR AS OUTWARD APPEARANCE WAS CONCERNED; BUT THAT BATTLE LEFT AN IMPRESSION ON THE TENDER MIND THAT WOULD NOT BE EASILY EFFACED. THIS MOTHER ACTED UNWISELY. SHE DID NOT REASON FROM CAUSE TO EFFECT. HER HARSH, INJUDICIOUS ACTION STIRRED THE WORST PASSIONS IN THE HEART OF HER CHILD, AND ON EVERY SIMILAR OCCASION THESE PASSIONS WOULD BE AROUSED AND STRENGTHENED.”

WHITE, 1954

Sometimes parents devote too much time finding fault in their children for everything they do. Listen to these words:

“YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BRING A GLOOMY CLOUD OVER THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR CHILDREN BY FAULTFINDING OR SEVERE CENSURE FOR TRIFLING MISTAKES. ACTUAL WRONG SHOULD BE MADE TO APPEAR JUST AS SINFUL AS IT IS, AND A FIRM, DECIDED COURSE SHOULD BE PURSUED TO PREVENT ITS RECURRENCE; YET CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE LEFT IN A HOPELESS STATE OF MIND, BUT WITH A DEGREE OF COURAGE THAT THEY CAN IMPROVE AND GAIN YOUR CONFIDENCE AND APPROVAL. CHILDREN MAY WISH TO DO RIGHT, THEY MAY PURPOSE IN THEIR HEARTS TO BE OBEDIENT; BUT THEY NEED HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT.”

WHITE, 1954, P. 279

I love those words at the end: “Children may wish to do right, they may purpose in their hearts to be obedient; but they need help and encouragement.”

We encourage you to spend time reading the 48th chapter of that book where Ellen White tells us as parents not to be too harsh in the way we discipline our children, not to continually censure our children, not to be arbitrary with our course of action, and much more.

## Conclusion

There are many more directives in the Bible to teach us how we should relate to one another as parents and children.

Today we only looked at four.

To children, the Bible says: “Honor your father and your mother,” and “obey your parents.”

To parents, the Bible says: “Train your children,” and “Don’t exasperate them.”

God desires that we may have good, healthy, positive relationships with our children. He wants us to reflect the relationship we have with Him.

[YOU CAN USE A STORY OF YOUR OWN OR THE FOLLOWING ONE TO CONCLUDE THIS SERMON]

17

A story is told of a man who came home from work late, tired and irritated, to find his 5-year old son waiting for him at the door. Their conversation went like this:

SON: “Daddy, may I ask you a question?”

DAD: “Yeah sure, what is it?” replied the man.

SON: “Daddy, how much do you make an hour?”

DAD: “That’s none of your business. Why do you ask such a thing?” the man said angrily.

SON: “I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?”

DAD: “If you must know, I make 30 dollars an hour.”

SON: “Oh,” the little boy replied, with his head down.

SON: “Daddy, may I please borrow a dollar?”

The father was furious and with anger in his voice he told his boy, “If the only reason you asked that is so you can borrow some money to buy a silly toy or some other nonsense, then you march yourself straight to your room right this moment.”

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door.

After the man had calmed down he started to think. Maybe there was something his little boy really needed to buy with that dollar. . . and he really didn't ask for money very often.

The man went to the door of his little boy's room and opened the door.

"Are you asleep, son?" He asked.

"No daddy, I'm awake," replied the boy. "I've been thinking, maybe I was too hard on you earlier" said the man. Here's the dollar you asked for."

The little boy sat straight up, smiling.

"Oh, thank you daddy!" He yelled.

Then, reaching under his pillow he pulled out some crumpled up bills.

When the father saw that the boy already had money he started to get angry again.

The little boy slowly counted out his money, and then looked up at his father.

"Why do you want more money if you already have some?" the father grumbled."

"Because I didn't have enough, but now I do," the little boy replied.

"Daddy, I have 30 dollars now. . . Can I buy an hour of your time? Please come home early tomorrow. I would like to have dinner with you."

The father was crushed.

He put his arms around his little son, and he begged for his forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

Parents, love your children, train your children, and don't irritate your children.

Children of any and all ages, love your parents, honor your parents, and obey your parents.

And may your relationship be always one of mutual respect, mutual admiration, and mutual learning.

Amen.

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# Building Marriage And Family

TRAFFORD FISCHER

## The Text

“AND I LOOKED AND AROSE AND SAID TO THE NOBLES AND TO THE OFFICIALS AND TO THE REST OF THE PEOPLE, “DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEM. REMEMBER THE LORD, WHO IS GREAT AND AWESOME, AND FIGHT FOR YOUR BROTHERS, YOUR SONS, YOUR DAUGHTERS, YOUR WIVES, AND YOUR HOMES.”

NEHEMIAH 4:14

The Old Testament records several occasions when the kings of Babylon and Persia took residents of Jerusalem captives. We don't know the names of all those who were forced from their homes but we know that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were included among the captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; Nehemiah was taken to Susa by the king of Persia.

We also know that these men were appointed as leaders in their new community even though they were slaves and captives. It is not known how or why, but Nehemiah was appointed a cup-bearer to the king. The king must have considered him a reliable and trustworthy captive.

One day, Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, who still lived in Jerusalem, arrived in Susa with

some other men to visit Nehemiah. Nehemiah asked them how things were back home in Jerusalem, and the report wasn't positive at all. They replied, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burnt with fire.” (Nehemiah 1:3).

Nehemiah loved Jerusalem and was distressed at this news. He sat down to mourn and weep for his city and its people; he fasted and prayed for several days. Nehemiah had never been sad in the presence of the king. When he returned to the king's service, the king said to him: “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart” (Nehemiah 2:2).

What an insightful king! What an incredible gift—to notice when someone is sad and encourage him or her to share his or her sorrow. We often get so busy we hardly notice when someone is hurting. We rush past and miss their pain. We say hello and don't take the time to see the hurt in their eyes, the furrowed brow of worry or the tears of pain. We need to ask God to help us be as the king of Persia—to be quick to say to those we see hurting—‘You are sad, and it would seem this is not because you are sick—this must be sadness of the heart,’ and offer them appropriate comfort and support.

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With fear and trepidation, Nehemiah tells the king how things are back in Jerusalem, and the king asks him what he would like to do. Nehemiah replies that he would like to return and rebuild Jerusalem. It is surprising that the king told him to go back and do exactly that! He also provided Nehemiah letters to the various governors in the territories to guarantee his safety while providing army officers to ensure his security. (Nehemiah 2:6-10).

So Nehemiah headed back to Jerusalem and after three days took a few men with him to inspect the city. His brother's report was accurate. The walls were crumbling and in some places had completely fallen. The gates were burnt and useless. But Nehemiah doesn't get disheartened or discouraged. He rolls up his sleeves and gets to work! He called the city leaders and said, "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace" (Nehemiah 2:17). He also told them about the gracious hand of God that was upon him in Susa and what the king had said to him. The people replied, "Let us start rebuilding" (Nehemiah 2:18). Nehemiah gains their support and engages all the families into rebuilding the walls. Section by section they remove the rubble and replace the stones.

In Nehemiah chapter 3, we find a list of many of those who joined in repairing the gates and walls. Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work to rebuild the Sheep Gate (Nehemiah 3:1); the sons of Hassenah rebuilt the Fish Gate (Nehemiah 3:3); Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section, and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, joined in (Nehemiah 3:8). In verse 12 it mentions that Shallum, son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters. This was a real family-project! And they worked with focus and energy. Nehemiah reports that "the people worked with all their hearts." (Nehemiah 4:6).

There's something exciting about working together as families on a common project and especially when we do it "with all our hearts." Families that join hand-in-hand in service to

the community and minister with love and grace make a profound difference to others and develop a strong sense of family 'togetherness.' Albert Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."<sup>1</sup> And John Wesley adds this wonderful directive: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."<sup>2</sup>

Our Churches will thrive when all the families work together in their church "with all their hearts." Some time ago a church member told me that he wasn't happy with his church. He said the church should be doing more for the needy in the community! I said to him, "Which family, or families in your church, should be doing more for the community?" He looked at me with surprise, so I asked him again, "which particular family or families should be doing more?" He thought for a while, and then smiled and said, "I guess I should be doing more." The church is a "family of families."

Our church today is made up of a whole gathering of families. The church isn't some nebulous 'thing' that exists to be complained about or ridiculed or regarded as a supplier of all good things! It's a big family of families! Here is a key reason we need to put time and energy into our relationships and make a real commitment to strengthen and enrich our marriages and families. If we have strong marriages and healthy families, we will have a strong and healthy church. This is something we need to do "with all our hearts."

Well, the wall building in Jerusalem was successful and exciting until Sanballat and Tobiah and a few locals in the community heard about it. These people didn't like what they saw! They didn't want this city getting back into shape. They felt much safer when the city was in shambles. So they created trouble. They harassed the builders and called out discouraging and disparaging comments. Tobiah the Ammonite called out, "If even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" (Nehemiah 4:3). The wall-builders become discouraged and fearful. They

are concerned for their personal safety (Nehemiah 4:10-12). Nehemiah takes this threat to heart and sets out to deal with it!

Now notice chapter 4, verse 14: “After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

### **Remember The Lord**

Nehemiah provides the best answer to his people’s concerns: “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome.” Friends, we serve an awesome God. We do not worship a weak or helpless God. We are not disciples of some puff of wind or some pretend god, nor do we serve an unknown god. Our God is great and awesome and we are the apple of His eye; the lost sheep rescued by His own hands; his prodigal sons and daughters who, when He “sees us from afar off,” runs to greet us and welcomes us home (Luke 15:20). He is not a distant, harsh judge; not a callous ruler who reluctantly hands out rewards for the few. Our God is great and awesome and personally invested in us as His people.

### **Fight For Your Relationships**

Now notice what Nehemiah says to the people. After pointing them to their awesome God, he then says, “Fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.” (Nehemiah 4:14).

Nehemiah said to the people, ‘Our God is great and awesome. So sit back and do nothing. Just go about life as you always do and leave it to Him!’ NO, this is not what we read in this verse! He said, “Fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

On a number of occasions in Scripture God invited His people to stand still and see His power in action. He said to Moses, “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14). But on so many other occasions God called for action. When Jesus healed people He called them to action: “stretch out your

hand,” “take up your bed,” “go and wash in the pool.”

Nehemiah was saying to the people, “These are serious times. This is a crisis! We need to stand up for our families and do everything we can to protect them and keep them whole! We cannot afford just to float along and hope for the best. It’s time to act!’

As a child I can recall my mother saying many times, “Don’t just stand there! Do something!” Nehemiah called his families to action. ‘Don’t just stand there and worry or fret: recognise that your God is an awesome God, and step into action.’

When I was a teenager, I joined my older brother and four other friends on a three-day canoe trip down a winding and log-filled river! We had to be alert to the potential danger of obstructions and possible damage to our canoes and our lives. One of my friends sat in the front of our four-man canoe and his task was to alert us of any upcoming dangers so we could take the necessary action to keep safe on the river. This meant that we had to row together to get ourselves out of any danger. Unfortunately my friend didn’t always get it right! If he saw a log in the river a long way off he would call out “log” and row frantically in any direction. But if all of a sudden a log appeared just in front and it was now very important that we all row, he would ‘freeze’! He would become so frightened that he just sat there still.

Nehemiah couldn’t afford to have his people frozen in fear when it was time to act. Nor could he afford to have his people unaware of the need to work together with energy and commitment. This wasn’t the time to just stand there—this was the time to ‘do something.’ It’s time to row! There are dangers in the river and they are straight ahead.

### **Build And Protect**

Now notice chapter 4, verses 16 and 17: “From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armour. The officers

posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other.”

They ‘built’ with one hand, and ‘protected’ with the other! Nehemiah’s plan is simple but bold—‘build’ and ‘protect.’ He doesn’t concentrate solely on building while leaving his people vulnerable, nor does he spend his energy and resources protecting but living in a heap of rubble. He builds, and protects.

### **Crumbling Relationships**

In our communities there are many marriages and families that are crumbling walls and burnt gates. Sadly, within our church we may have couples that feel their marriage is crumbling and are struggling to hold their marriage together. Families may feel like gates that are falling off their hinges. As God’s families—families who live and serve a great and awesome God—we must work together and fight for what we believe to be important. We need to carefully assess our cultures and customs and not allow ourselves to be squeezed into the mold of a different world. We need to decide what changes we can live with and what changes we cannot. We need to decide where we draw a line and make a stand. We can’t afford to float along with our eyes shut and hope for the best. The old saying is still true—“a dead fish floats with the stream, it’s a live one that swims against the current.”

### **God-Shaped Marriages**

One of the most powerful images God has in mind for us as married couples and families is found in Ephesians. Paul states: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her... In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...” (Ephesians 5:25-29).

The marriage relationship is a symbol of God’s love for His people. A married couple makes a statement to the world about how much God loves us! This is a very significant challenge presented today to all of us in the church who are married. God has declared that a marriage between a husband and wife is to be a powerful statement to all that God loves His people as we love each other. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if people were to look at the way we express our love to each other and say, “God must love His people deeply!”

Paul encouraged the men of the Ephesus Church to love their wives, he encouraged the wives to respect their husbands. “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33). There’s no hint that they should give up on their relationships when times get difficult, or see them as too hard to commit to building and enriching. Paul introduced the principle of reciprocity: Husbands, must love their wives and wives must respect their husbands.

And it’s the same principle for the children. Paul says, “Children, obey your parents.” (Ephesians 6:1). That suggests parents must make it easy to be honoured. Then he says, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children” (Ephesians 6:4). In Colossians it says: “Do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21). Children, that means you will do all you can not to hassle your parents.

Research continues to demonstrate the powerful impact a strong marriage and happy family have on many aspects of life. Happy marriages and families contribute to better health, longer life, a greater sense of personal happiness and well-being. It also contributes to a better quality of life, less difficulties at school for children, less problems associated with drugs and alcohol, and less behavioral problems for children and adolescents.<sup>3</sup>

We are invited to build and protect our marriages and families. We are encouraged to fight for our brothers, and sisters, and parents,

and children, and our homes. This is a definite trumpet-call to invest in our families, irrespective of their description or shape! Your family may be different from mine! Some of you may have experienced changes in your family that you never dreamed possible. Some of you may have lost a partner and you miss them terribly. Some may have family members who no longer form a regular part of family life. Some of you may be single parents, or you may be ‘grandparent-parents—you are full-time caregivers of your grandchildren!’ Some of you may be dreaming of family and hoping to start as soon as possible! Some of you are happy to be you and feel no current need to be in a permanent relationship.

The invitation to all of us is the same, “build and protect.” We must make a commitment to do all we can to ensure our relationships are the best. Let’s put in the hard work to make them everything God would wish them to be.

Those who are married, here is a message from Hart & Morris (2003): “Staying married and working on your marriage may be a risk, but so is walking away from it. Choosing to try again puts you back in a vulnerable place, but so does casting yourself upon unsheltered waters... Fostering a close emotional connection and working toward a healthy relationship is very possible, no matter how bad your marriage may seem to be. God will hear the cry of your hurting and lonely heart. He will meet you where you are.”

Scripture makes it clear that while our relationships may reflect the brokenness that’s part of our days, they may also, under the grace and encouragement of God, paint a picture of His endless and inexhaustible love and grace.

## Conclusion

What a challenge for us as Christians! What a challenge for us as God’s people—to learn to be genuine and true lovers in a world short on love; to learn to encourage and affirm each other in a world short on encouragement and support; to know what it is to love and be loved; to know what it is to be a friend and soul-mate; and to find new ways to build connections with others that declare to the world the immense nature of God’s love.

Wouldn’t it be best if our relationships, our marriages, and our families were strong and resilient and a declaration to the Sanballats and the Tobiahs in our society that we intend to be around for a while?

In conclusion the wise man Solomon gives the following counsel: “Place me like a seal over your heart... for love is as strong as death... Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.” (Song of Solomon 8:6-7). It’s my sincere wish that nothing will be able to quench the love you have for your awesome God and for one another. May nothing at all ever wash it away.

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# Mission, Hope, and Healing

PETER N LANDLESS

## The Text

JESUS WENT THROUGH ALL THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES, TEACHING IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM AND HEALING EVERY DISEASE AND SICKNESS. WHEN HE SAW THE CROWDS, HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE HARASSED AND HELPLESS, LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. THEN HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, “THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW.”  
MATTHEW 9:35-37

Every 40 seconds, another life ends through darkness and despair, often surrounded by circumstances devoid of hope. (World Health Organization, 2014). This statistic should jolt us out of our comfort zone, and even more so as we qualify this sad description with the fact that the most vulnerable to the tragedy of suicide are those between the ages of 15 and 29 years. Hopelessness is no respecter of persons, but it is sobering to note that the most endangered are the younger population. Does this surprise us? The devil has long targeted our youth, and his attacks will not wane as we reach the climax of the end times. In many places our young people graduate from school and sadly they graduate from the church at the same time.

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All these thoughts flooded through my mind as we sat in the Executive Board Room of the World Health Organization for two days of high-level meetings, where the imperative of reducing this horrendous suicide statistic was presented to representatives from various sectors of society. My thoughts raced as I considered the opportunities offered by a Church that systematically implements Comprehensive Health Ministry (CHM)—comprehensive, as it addresses wholeness of body, mind, spirit, social, and emotional, but also every ministry embraces holistic well-being—it is so logical and appropriate. Wholeness is intrinsic and foundational to every outreach, mission, ministry, and endeavor of God’s Church.

My eyes then focused on the name boards of each delegation. There were various countries, universities, institutes, and NGOs (Non Government Organizations), but only one faith-based organization: The Seventh-day Adventist Church! What an honor, what a responsibility, what an opportunity to share with these august and focused groups that the actual “elephant in the room” was (is!) the absence of faith initiatives to solve this huge problem or imperative: When broaching this subject, an uncomfortable resistance, mixed with embarrassment, seemed to descend. Health, hope, mental and emotional well-being, ministry, and mission are inextricably linked! A church—not just any church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church—entrusted with the mission and ministry of Comprehensive Health—is

ideally and providentially poised to deliver not only physical relief, but mental health in a time when it is projected that between 2015 to 2020, mental health issues are about to become the single greatest cause of disability in the world (WHO, 2014). What an opportunity; what a responsibility! Every church a center of health education, and every member a health (medical) missionary—comprehensively—body, mind, spirit, emotionally and socially.

Jesus is our “Pattern Man,” the Great Physician, the Great Healer, the Source of Hope. When addressing the imperative and potential of Comprehensive Health Ministry, Ellen White wrote prophetically and instructively:

“I CAN SEE THAT THE MEDICAL MISSIONARY WORK IS TO BE A GREAT ENTERING WEDGE, WHEREBY THE DISEASED SOUL MAY BE REACHED.”  
WHITE, 1923, P. 535

“THE UNION OF CHRISTLIKE WORK FOR THE BODY AND CHRISTLIKE WORK FOR THE SOUL IS THE TRUE INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL.”  
WHITE, 1902, PP. 14, 15

The secular world is using the following language:

“PREVENTION CAN ALSO BE STRENGTHENED BY ENCOURAGING PROTECTIVE FACTORS SUCH AS STRONG PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, A PERSONAL BELIEF SYSTEM AND POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES.”  
WHO REPORT, 2014,  
PREVENTING SUICIDE, P. 8

I heard the importance of destigmatization of mental health and all that pertains to emotional well-being; we must be free to talk about these matters in an embracing and non-judgmental way. I heard the words care, compassion, and hope; words that describe our mission and the indispensable ingredients missing from so many initiatives addressing human needs. God forbid that these would ever be absent from the mission endeavor(s)

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, because without these, our mission is incomplete and will fail.

Jesus, our Pattern Man, demonstrated holistic and comprehensive ministry by embracing the whole person. I am fascinated by the wonderful encounters Jesus had with the different people of His day. Whenever He engaged individuals (or they, Him), the conversation and emphasis focused on the spiritual even, and often especially, when the miracles of healing took place. We so often recount the miracles relating to physical health. Jesus also addressed the emotional and mental—specifically and intentionally. The granting of forgiveness and the removal of guilt are often central to Christ’s ministry of healing. Comprehensive Health Ministry and the message of salvation are inextricably linked.

The mission of Christ was to heal the sick, encourage the hopeless, bind up the brokenhearted. This work of restoration is to be carried on among the needy, suffering ones of humanity. God calls not only for your benevolence, but your cheerful countenance, your hopeful words, the grasp of your hand. Relieve some of God’s afflicted ones. Some are sick, and hope has departed. Bring back the sunlight to them. There are souls who have lost their courage; speak to them, pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the Word of God. There is a soul sickness no balm can reach, no medicine heal. Pray for these, and bring them to Jesus Christ. And in all your work, Christ will be present to make impressions upon human hearts.

THIS IS THE KIND OF MEDICAL MISSIONARY WORK TO BE DONE. BRING THE SUNSHINE OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS INTO THE ROOM OF THE SICK AND SUFFERING. TEACH THE INMATES OF THE POOR HOMES HOW TO COOK. “HE SHALL FEED HIS FLOCK LIKE A SHEPHERD,” WITH TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL FOOD.  
WHITE, 1898, P. 105

Jesus was tired. Do any of you (us) identify with this? Have your busy eyes ever rested on the following words as recorded in John, chapter 4?

“JACOB’S WELL WAS THERE, AND JESUS  
TIED AS HE WAS FROM THE JOURNEY, SAT  
DOWN BY THE WELL.”  
JOHN 4: 6

“Tired as He was from the journey.” This description probably fits more of those in this audience than we might wish to admit. I am encouraged to know that Jesus felt weary at times, too. His tiredness was probably accentuated by His concern for the brokenness of the planet as the current challenges inside and outside of the Church accentuate our sense of fatigue at times.

Then a Samaritan woman comes to the well. The disciples were off to the “Adventist Book Center” to buy food for the journey—focusing on real, felt needs! Jesus then engages this Samaritan woman in conversation by asking for a drink. I love to imagine the surprise and awe in her expression as she questions Jesus on His appropriateness in asking her, a Samaritan woman, for water. She comes to the well at this hour to miss the penetrating and judgmental gazes of her fellow villagers. You see, she was carrying a load of emotional sorrows and guilt, brought into sharp relief by the attitude of others (and by her own behavior and situation).

Jesus shares with her the importance of salvation and reveals that He is the Living Water, the Embodiment of Salvation. They banter a little about where true worship takes place: “On this mountain,” or in Jerusalem. Jesus describes deep truth to her, and He describes true worship—that being in spirit and in truth.

He reveals Himself to her as the Messiah. Just then, the disciples return, but—although surprised that He was talking to a Samaritan woman—asked no questions. Have you ever wondered why the impetuous Peter refrained from some commentary or even correction? I like to imagine that as the disciples approached the scene, astonished, aghast, maybe even indignant at what they were witnessing, Jesus gave them “the look”—what “look” would that be? The one so well known to parents, children and even, or perhaps especially to spouses—the look that

articulates more clearly and sometimes more audibly than words the message “Don’t even think about making a comment, or fueling an argument!” It is recorded, “But no one asked, ‘What do you want?’ or ‘Why are you talking with her?’” (John 4: 27).

They offer him food. He is no longer hungry or tired because He finds His fulfillment and sustenance in mission. “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and finish His work.” (John 4:34).

The disciples are surprised! Jesus crossed every boundary of custom, religion, ethnicity, and gender, and ministered with compassion to a needy, guilty soul. The pen of inspiration tells us that, “A mysterious hand was turning the pages of her life history, bringing to view that which she had hoped to keep forever hidden.” (White, 1898, p. 187). She accepted salvation; she ran back to the city, persuaded others to come and meet Jesus, and they were blessed by His witness for a further two days.

“She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples.” (White, 1898, p. 195) What a blessed outcome of holistic, comprehensive ministry—Comprehensive Health Ministry!

WE HAVE COME TO A TIME WHEN EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH SHOULD TAKE HOLD OF MEDICAL MISSIONARY WORK. THE WORLD IS A LAZAR HOUSE FILLED WITH VICTIMS OF BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL DISEASE. EVERYWHERE PEOPLE ARE PERISHING FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTHS THAT HAVE BEEN COMMITTED TO US. THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH ARE IN NEED OF AN AWAKENING, THAT THEY MAY REALIZE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO IMPART THESE TRUTHS.  
WHITE, 1855, VOL 7, P. 62

Come with me now to the experience of Peter and John as they practice and implement mission and Comprehensive Health Ministry, as learned from Jesus. We fast-forward into the book of Acts, chapters 3 and 4. At three in the afternoon, Peter and John are going to

the Gate Beautiful and the Temple. There is a man who has been lame or paralyzed since birth. He is brought to this place each day to beg. He locks gazes with Peter and John, and asks for money. You know how it is, when someone approaches you begging. You can turn your eyes, like a Pharisee and “cross to the other side”. Peter responds in words that have become part of everyday parlance—but first he says, “Look at us!” The man looks with a hopeful expectancy, and then comes the disappointment: “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you.” Hope dashed! Have you experienced this? You needed money or something else and the giver changes the game! But the story doesn’t stop there.

“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ Taking him by the right hand (notice the words right hand—CHM is the right hand of the Gospel Message), he helped him up and instantly, the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk.” (Acts 3:6-8). The man’s demeanor changed—walking, jumping, and praising God. Can you, can I imagine this? Bereft of movement from birth, he now has energy and joyful ability to move, walk, jump, and be exuberant about it all! What a change!

The people noticed; the Pharisees noticed, and questioned—by whose power; how did this happen? Peter, the one who had denied Jesus, boldly speaks up following his commission to Comprehensive Health Ministry, “Feed My sheep.” “It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete [comprehensive] healing to him.” (Acts 3:16).

Body, mind, spirit, social, and emotional—all aspects are being addressed in this event. The Sanhedrin now gets involved, they were in the silos of denial: “By what power?” (Acts 4:7), and Peter, primed and filled by the Holy Spirit, responds:

“IF WE ARE BEING CALLED TO ACCOUNT TODAY FOR AN ACT OF KINDNESS SHOWN TO A CRIPPLE AND ARE ASKED HOW HE

WAS HEALED, THEN KNOW THIS, YOU AND ALL THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL: IT IS BY THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, BUT WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THAT THIS MAN STANDS BEFORE YOU HEALED...”

ACTS 4:9-10

And here is the punchline—burgeoning from an act of healing of body, mind, and spirit:

“SALVATION IS FOUND IN NO ONE ELSE, FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN TO MEN BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED.”

ACTS 4:11

There it is! No other name, the name of Jesus—in family ministry, education, youth ministry, public campus ministry, chaplaincy, children’s ministry, publishing ministry, health ministry—Comprehensive Health Ministry—no other name than Jesus—central, foremost, foundational, and final!

But look at the reaction of the people, Sanhedrin and all...

“WHEN THEY SAW THE COURAGE OF PETER AND JOHN AND REALIZED THEY WERE UNSCHOOLED, ORDINARY MEN, THEY WERE ASTONISHED AND THEY TOOK NOTE THAT THESE MEN HAD BEEN WITH JESUS.”

ACTS 4:13

Will people be astonished, surprised, pleased, awed, delighted, taken aback that we have been with Jesus—regardless of topic or challenge? Will they be astonished that God’s Spirit can keep His Church united despite the varied viewpoints? Note that there is a subtle, but definite difference in nuance. As I wrote the script, I wrote “untied” instead of “united”, only one letter placement difference. Yet here is the difference between strength and weakness, “United we stand,” “Together we can do more.” “Unity is strength,” or—God forbid—the opposite, personalized by the end result of being divided and conquered! Have you, have I been with Jesus?

Peter and John are apprehended; the saints band together in prayer, they are released. The saints continue to pray—Comprehensive Health Ministry and mission must be marinated in prayer and drenched with grace—they pray “enable your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:30) Then the place where they were meeting was “shaken.” (verse 31). Would that our lives will be similarly shaken!

THE LORD WILL GIVE YOU SUCCESS IN THIS WORK [MEDICAL MISSIONARY WORK], FOR THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION, WHEN IT IS INTERWOVEN WITH THE PRACTICAL LIFE, WHEN IT IS LIVED AND PRACTICED. THE UNION OF CHRISTLIKE WORK FOR THE BODY AND CHRISTLIKE WORK FOR THE SOUL IS THE TRUE INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL. WHITE, 1902, PP. 14, 15

Comprehensive Health Ministry, healing (wholeness in brokenness), and mission are inextricably united. You see concepts of ministry embody Christ’s method of ministry in reaching the people.

What does it really and practically look like?

It looks as if Jesus has been here (is here)—lives and circumstances are changed;

It is a mission and a ministry—not just a method;

It reaches within and without—to the needs of all—wholeness and preventive lifestyle initiatives;

It offers a continuum of care—including the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social. We are in for the long haul—until Jesus comes again. Maranatha!

## Conclusion

United in prayer, emboldened by His Spirit, claiming the promises and name of Jesus—knowing that there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved, and under Whom we serve, and Who strengthens and gives us hope and healing in mission—let us be a focus of astonishment as we move forward. Astonishment, not because of facile, factious argument, but because we have been with Jesus and are galvanized into bringing hope and healing to a broken planet, groaning to behold His soon return.

May God bless and lead us in our mission to bring hope and healing, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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# CHILDREN'S STORIES

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# Be Ready Puppet Ministry

LINDA MEI LIN KOH

## Biblical Principle

AND LET US CONSIDER ONE  
ANOTHER IN ORDER TO STIR UP  
LOVE AND GOOD WORKS.  
HEBREWS 10:24

“Is there something we can do for our community?” asked a group of youngsters age 10-12 from the Tacoma Central Church in Washington State.

“Yah, what can we do for the community? We’re just a bunch of kids,” echoed the teens together.

“There must be something we can do for many of these overweight kids, pastor?” asked the group with enthusiasm.

“Well, maybe we could use puppets to teach about good health and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle,” suggested Pastor Brent Kimura.

“That’s a great idea! We are for it. Let’s pray and ask God to lead us,” the teenagers suggested.

They prayed for several weeks and they felt God was leading them into this ministry. Soon they got someone who taught them how to make those large-sized puppets. They made puppets

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to represent the elderly, children, teenagers, doctors, nurses, and many more. It was not as easy as they thought, but it was fun just dressing these puppet characters.

“Kids, our first show is going to be...” announced Pastor Brent excitedly one evening.

“Wait, wait, Pastor, let me guess,” begged one of the teens.

“Forget it, let’s hear it from Pastor Brent,” retorted another.

“Yes, young people, we are going to perform at the community fair! Isn’t that great?” exclaimed Pastor Brent.

“Let’s practice our parts well,” reminded Pastor Brent, “and don’t forget, we need to practice what we preach.” Echoed the pastor.

“Yah, we need to practice healthful living if we want to teach others to be healthy, right, Pastor?” exclaimed one of the group members.

“Okay, don’t eat between meals, no sweet stuff, drink plenty of water...” yelled one of the teens.

“Okay, okay, enough of this. Let’s be serious. If we love Jesus, we will live the way He wants us to. Besides, our bodies are the temples of God,” reminded another teen.

“What should we call our ourselves?” asked Pastor Brent thoughtfully.

“I know what! How about calling ourselves the **Be Ready Puppet Ministry Team**,” suggested one of the team members.

“If we want to teach others how to get ready to go and live with Jesus in the heavenly kingdom, then our job is to help others get ready to live healthily here on earth first,” said one of the girls.

“I like that name. Okay, let’s call ourselves the **Be Ready Puppet Ministry Team**,” Pastor Brent said affirming.

Soon the puppet team was involved in many outreach programs. They did health shows in schools, community fairs, camp meetings, children’s church, and others. They also shared Jesus’ stories with many children in the local churches and in the community.

The young people themselves had a chance to testify of how this ministry had impacted their own lives. They not only taught other young people about living healthily, but they themselves became convinced of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and started to practice healthful habits.

Some months later as the young people were resting after their performance, they got into a serious conversation.

“Guess what? I seem to have more energy these days when I sleep enough at night,” said one of them excitedly.

“Me, too. I feel I can think better and remember more since I started riding my bike two to three times a week,” another exclaimed,

“My mom started to restrict my television and internet hours, and I have to exercise outdoors,” he added thoughtfully.

“I eat less of all these MacDonald’s and French fries,” replied one of the girls.

“That’s wonderful, young people,” exclaimed Pastor Brent as his face lit up, “I’m so glad that when you are ministering to other kids and young people, you are also transforming your lives by living a healthy lifestyle,” smiled the young pastor.

“I didn’t realize how this involvement has changed me, too,” explained one of the boys, “My mom said that she noticed me drinking lots of water and less pop soda,” he continued with a smile beaming all over his face.

“Great! Let’s stay healthy as we help others to be healthy!” Pastor Brent reminded the group.

“Okay, some good news! Are you ready for this?” beamed Pastor Brent with a twinkle in his eye.

“We are going to San Antonio in July!” shouted Pastor Brent.

The whole group surrounded the young pastor as they hugged him and hugged each other tightly, yelling gleefully. Yes, their dream to go and perform somewhere at the GC Session in San Antonio finally materialized. They had prayed for weeks and months for a window of opportunity. It finally came! God answered their prayer. They were invited to perform their health puppet shows at the GC Children’s Ministries booth. How exciting that they had been given another opportunity to get others ready for heaven!

# You Can't Put it Back

PAMELA CONSUEGRA

## Biblical Principle

“...DON'T USE YOUR ANGER AS FUEL FOR REVENGE. AND DON'T STAY ANGRY. DON'T GO TO BED ANGRY. DON'T GIVE THE DEVIL THAT KIND OF FOOHOLD IN YOUR LIFE.”  
EPHESIANS 4:26, 27  
(MESSAGE BIBLE)

“Look what I did. I made a mess and now I can't fix it. It is impossible to put the toothpaste back in the tube once it came out. You know, boys and girls, it's the same thing with angry words. They come out of our mouth easily but we can't put them back. We cannot put them back in our mouths any easier than we can put the toothpaste back in the tube.”

The Bible says, “...*don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life.*”

“Let's remember to only use kind words because angry words hurt others and we can't put them back once they are said. Let's pray to Jesus and ask Him to help us only say kind words.”

You may close with prayer and then ask for a child volunteer to pray also.

“Good morning, boys and girls. Today, I have something to show you. It's a tube of toothpaste. And, I'm going to have so much fun by squeezing this out.” Demonstrate how easy it is to squeeze the toothpaste out the tube by squeezing some into a small bowl. Ask for a volunteer to squeeze some out. Give several children an opportunity to squeeze some toothpaste into the bowl.

“Now, that was fun. Look at all that toothpaste. But, now we need to fix it. We have to put it all back inside the tube.” Try to put it back in the tube yourself using the spoon. “Oh, no, I am having a lot of trouble. Who wants to help me?” Allow several children to try. Of course it will be impossible.

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# Missionary For Heaven

LINDA MEI LIN KOH

## Biblical Principle

GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES  
OF ALL THE NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM  
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF  
THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.  
MATTHEW 28: 19,20

"I'm happy today, I'm happy today, in Jesus Christ, I'm happy today," sang Mateus Soares of Brazil. Yes, eight-year old Mateus was excited to know Jesus and to love Him. His little heart was so full of joy that he wanted to share Jesus with others in his neighborhood so that they can go to heaven with him.

"Papa, I want to start a Bible study class, can I?" Mateus begged his father. "Do you know how, Sonny?" asked his father doubtfully.

"I can learn and I know Jesus will help me. I want all my friends and neighbors to go to heaven to meet Jesus," replied Mateus with his face beaming.

"Okay, let's try it. We'll ask the pastor to help you with some tips," said father encouragingly.

Mateus prayed about his plan and then started visiting his neighbors and friends.

"How are you, Pedro?" Mateus greeted his neighbor with a big smile and shook his hand firmly.

"Do you believe in Jesus? Do you know He is coming back soon to take us to live with him in heaven?"

"I am inviting you to join my Bible study group every Wednesday night. Please come," said Mateus with a big smile on his face.

He went from door to door inviting his neighbors and schoolmates to his Bible study group. On the first night only a few neighbors came; some came just out of curiosity. But soon it grew to more than ten individuals as they learn about Jesus and his plan of salvation. Mateus was earnest in teaching his neighbors about the heavenly home. He wanted everyone to go to heaven and live with Jesus forever!

God used Mateus amazingly. Soon his Bible study group began to grow and before long he led ten neighbors and friends to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Yes, Mateus and his group continued to sing, "I will wear a crown in my Father's house, in my Father's house, in my Father's house..."

Mateus ran his Bible study group for three years. But before long he realized that all the new members did not have a church to worship in. This made him sad.

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“Pastor Johnson, why don’t we build a church for all our members to worship together every Sabbath?” asked Mateus passionately.

“Wow, that is a great plan! But where do we get the money? I don’t think our conference can help us very much,” answered the pastor with a doubtful look.

“God will help us, I know,” echoed Mateus confidently.

“But I am willing to help raise the money,” suggested the enthusiastic boy, “maybe our members can all help out,” he added.

When not in school, Mateus went about raising funds for the new church they were going to build. Pretty soon, the members got together with Pastor Johnson to help build the church. After school, Mateus would rush to the church site to help lay some bricks and mortar.

It was not an easy road for Mateus and the others. At times, they felt discouraged, but nothing could dampen the spirit of this little boy.

“Pastor, can we pray to Jesus for more cement?” asked Mateus earnestly.

“Yes, let’s fast and pray that God will find us a way to finish our task,” Pastor Johnson suggested.

Mateus prayed earnestly. Every member fasted and prayed for several days, asking God to intervene and provide. Many sacrificed to give more to help finish their church. God did not fail His people.

After many months, the church was finally finished. There was much rejoicing and praise on the day of the church dedication. Many shed tears of joy and gratitude for what God had done for them, and especially for sending a little boy with a big dream of preparing his neighbors and friends for heaven.

Mateus continued to work among his classmates, sharing the wonderful news of Jesus’ soon return and the joy of living with Him in heaven. He prepared many friends who have now been baptized into the church. Nothing could stop a boy’s desire to get involved in preparing others for the heavenly kingdom!

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# SEMINARS

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# And They Lived Happily Ever After

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

**WHEN YOUR MARRIAGE IS STRUGGLING, THE WORLD FEELS LIKE A SHAKY PLACE. BUT WHEN IT IS STRONG, YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN TAKE ON THE WORLD! MARRIAGE EXPERTS WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER SHARE THE PRINCIPLES THAT CAN MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE BETTER THAN EVER.**

after long year and seemingly managing their chaos demonstrates a high level of commitment. But for those of us who watch from a distance, it all seems highly stressful and quite dysfunctional.

On the other hand, it is a joy to watch families whose commitment to each other is characterized by a high level of kindness, compassion, patience, forgiveness, humility, and teamwork. In reality, even though the family seems like a well-oiled machine, they face as many challenges as the previous one. The difference is that they have practiced and learned how to handle life's daily stresses with a high level of grace, skill, and humor.

## **So which of these two options does your family most closely resemble?**

The truth is, there are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. So, when we talk about having a marriage that feels connected, we are not talking about a marriage that has no problems. Rather, we are describing a couple that enjoys relatively high levels of satisfaction and stability in their marital relationship. In a connected marriage, the couple is intentional about fixing problems in their relationship and is committed to being kind, patient, understanding, and forgiving. To be sure, it takes commitment to remain connected in marriage and to build on the dreams each person brought to the marriage. But this kind of commitment is worth it: it contributes to the couple's happiness, health, and quality of life.

Do you have a great marriage with a few sad times, or a sad marriage with a few great times? Your response to that question will reveal whether you feel connected—or disconnected—with your spouse.

Most couples go into marriage expecting to have a terrific time. Why then are so many couples experiencing distress rather than the bliss they expected when they first got married?

All of us know families that appear toxic in their daily interactions. The parents are constantly arguing, while the children often ignore directives from their parents and seem to be doing their own thing. Notwithstanding, just staying together year

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To experience the joys that marriage was meant to bring, it's important to keep these time-tested principles in mind:

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**TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE YEARS, YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE DAYS—ONE DAY AT A TIME.**

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We recently celebrated 30 years of marriage. Our marriage has not been all fun and games, but celebrated is the perfect word to describe what we feel when we look back at all of the emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual experiences we've had together. As we look back, we know that our marriage has been an extraordinary and satisfying experience we would do all over again: it is the place where we have found the most emotional support, connection, and safety.

But, in order to make it through the years, we had to make it through the days—one at a time. A husband and wife must be intentional about connecting with each other in meaningful ways every day—listening to each other, holding hands, doing acts of kindness. It's through the little things in life that you convey to your spouse that they have special value to you.

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**TRYING TO GROW A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT HEALTHY COMMUNICATION IS LIKE ATTEMPTING TO MAKE APPLE JUICE WITHOUT APPLES.**

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Over the years, these small daily encounters add up, building a marriage that feels safe to the couple, a marriage that can withstand difficulties along the way. In their book *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, sociologist Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher describe the security that comes from a committed marriage:

“HUSBANDS AND WIVES OFFER EACH OTHER COMPANIONSHIP, SEX, PARTNERSHIP, BUT THEY ALSO OFFER EACH OTHER A TYPE OF INSURANCE THAT IS BETTER THAN ANY POLICY EITHER OF THEM COULD BUY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST LIFE'S UNEXPECTED EVENTS.”

Trying to grow a strong relationship without healthy communication is like attempting to make apple juice without apples. It is simply impossible. Healthy communication is the principal skill in maintaining marriage intimacy. The more intimate the relationship becomes, the more sensitive and humble the communication must be.

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**MARRIAGE ISN'T JUST ABOUT RAISING KIDS AND SPLITTING CHORES.**

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Prominent psychologist John M. Gottman, author of *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, proposes: “Marriage isn't just about raising kids, splitting chores, and making love. It can also have a spiritual dimension that has to do with creating an inner life together—a culture rich with symbols and rituals.”

The Bible states, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11, NKJV). This is how couples create an inner life together—by treating words as precious and communicating as if giving gifts of gold and silver.

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**THE QUALITY OF YOUR MARRIAGE DEPENDS ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR COMMUNICATION.**

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The quality of your marriage will depend on the quality of your communication. Couples who communicate frequently and tenderly experience a level of intimacy that couples who communicate infrequently and harshly can never reach.

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## **YOUR SPOUSE HAS AN EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT. DEPOSIT MORE THAN YOU WITHDRAW.**

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The emotional bank account is like any other bank account: you can only make withdrawals from an account that has something in it. In a bank account, if you're making more withdrawals than deposits, pretty soon there will be no money available. The same is true of the marriage relationship. You can't expect to get, get, get without putting something into the account first. When you are kind to your spouse, you are making deposits in their emotional account. The more deposits you make, the more rich your relationship will be. The opposite—trying to get more than you give—leads to a relationship that is bankrupt.

So, how are you doing with deposits in your spouse's emotional bank account? Are you kind, patient, affirming, loving, and forgiving on a regular basis? Or, are you more commonly sarcastic, impatient, critical, demanding, and crude?

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## **IF YOU DON'T LET THINGS GO, YOU WILL BECOME BITTER AND ANGRY.**

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Forgiveness is another essential element in your journey of enhancing your relationships. The ancient wisdom of Ephesians 4:31, 32 offers

this timeless counsel: "Get rid of your bitterness, hot tempers, anger, loud quarreling, cursing, and hatred. Be kind to each other, sympathetic, forgiving each other as God has forgiven you through Christ".

The problems listed in that passage—bitterness, hot tempers, anger, loud quarreling, cursing, hatred—can easily escalate, building one upon the other. So it's better to stop the cycle as soon as it begins—and that usually means letting something go before it sets off bitterness (and everything else that will follow).

Bitterness is an established resentment that poisons the entire inner person. Our spouse does something we don't like, so we harbor bitterness against them, and hot tempers start to boil. That leads to anger, which is the blast on the outside of the feelings on the inside. Anger invariably leads to loud quarreling or cursing. Sometimes we would do well to let things blow over instead of letting them blow up.

So then, how about your marriage? Have you been contributing to healthy or toxic interactions? Can you be honest with yourself about what you have (or have not been doing) to add to the distress or improvement of your marriage? Are you determined to do all you can to make your marriage a place where your spouse feels safe, cared for, and affirmed?

It takes effort to build a great marriage, but it's worth it. If you make the commitment to stay connected, your marriage will not just survive the years but will thrive in your daily life.

# Nurturing Healthy Emotions

KAREN HOLFORD

## The Text

“FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,  
DECLARES THE LORD, PLANS TO PROSPER YOU  
AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU  
HOPE AND A FUTURE.”  
JEREMIAH 29:11

## Overview of seminar:

### What is the seminar about?

This is an interactive seminar about emotions. We all experience positive emotions that fill us up and energize us, and negative emotions that drain us. We need to experience a healthy and balanced ratio of positive to negative emotions to flourish and be resilient. According to psychologist Barbara Frederickson in her book, *‘Positivity’*<sup>1</sup>, the baseline ratio for a healthy emotional balance is three times more positive emotional experiences than negative emotional experiences.

This seminar explores our main negative emotions, and how we can help our children and ourselves manage them better. It also explores our positive emotions and how they can become more integrated into our lives.

Towards the end of the workshop there are ideas for helping families check in with each other emotionally.

### Why is it important?

We are often concerned about our spiritual and physical health, but we can easily forget that we need to

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take care of our emotional health, too. Jesus came that we might have abundant lives. Our emotional health contributes to the sense of well being, hopefulness, joy, peace of mind, gratitude, positive attitudes and caring relationships that make up the abundant lives He wants us to experience.

### Who is it for?

This seminar is for anyone. Children with their families can participate in many of the activities. Couples can work together and single people in pairs or small groups. Everyone can benefit from the information and activities in the seminar.

### When and where can it be used?

This seminar can take 2-3 hours depending on your chosen activities, and how long people spend talking together and participating in the interactive experiences. It can also be used as a community outreach event. The activity tables have been tried and tested at community events, on Sabbath afternoons, at camps, during parenting seminars and as workshops at retreats.

### Preparation

- Read through the whole seminar to have a complete overview.
- Select the sections of the seminar you plan to use.
- If children will be present, make sure you meet their needs and supply the children with the ‘feelings worksheets’ and coloring materials, etc.
- Print and copy sufficient handouts for your group.
- Print off the instruction cards and worksheets for the tables.

- Gather the other materials needed for the tables — if possible place the materials for each activity in a different bag or container to facilitate a quick and efficient set up.
- You will need a flip chart or white board and marker pens.

### Welcome and opening

- Thank everyone for coming to the seminar.
- Pray that the seminar will be a blessing.
- Describe what you will be doing and why.

### Introduction

Today we will spend time thinking about our emotional health. When we have happy and healthy emotions we are more likely to have happy and caring relationships, do well at school or in our work, and be physically and spiritually healthy.

Before we start let's think about why God gave us so many emotions.

Ask the group:

### Why is it important for human beings to experience emotions?

Gather their answers on a flip chart and make sure the list includes the following points:

- Emotions are gifts from God. (Imagine what life would be like if we didn't experience any emotion).
- Emotions are not good or bad. They are the natural way for our body to respond to events, and they help us to make sense of our experiences.
- Emotions help us to build and enrich our relationships.
- Our emotions can bring us closer to God and to each other.

### Sharing happy moments

- Find a partner next to you and spend a few moments sharing a time when you were really happy during the past week, or month.
- If you are here as a couple, share these stories with each other.
- If you are here as a family, listen to the stories of your children as a priority because we have a limited time.
- If you are on your own, find a friend, or make a new friend.

- Allow 5 minutes for pairs to share their stories.
- Ask people to notice how they are feeling after sharing their happy moments (peaceful, happy, good, warm, etc.).

### Paul's Positive Ideas

Let's explore Paul's ideas for experiencing more of these positive and happy emotions in our life. (Give the younger children a 'Feelings' worksheet to complete).

- Divide the adults and high school students into small groups of 3-4 people.
- Ask each group to turn to Philippians chapter 4 and to make a list of Paul's specific ideas for nurturing positive emotions and thoughts.
- After 5 minutes gather their ideas and write them on the flip chart.
- Ask each group to contribute one idea and then ask for further ideas.
- Add in any extra ideas from the list below if necessary.
- Invite feedback in response to the list of Paul's Positive Ideas.

### Paul's positive ideas in Philippians 4 verse by verse

- 1 Celebrate the strengths of other people.
- 2-3 Help the people around you sort out their differences and conflicts.
- 4 Rejoice! Focus on good things to celebrate, even in hard times.
- 5 Be gentle and kind to everyone you meet.
- 6 Turn your worries into prayers, and pray with thanksgiving.
- 7 Let the peace of Jesus fill your mind.
- 8 Think about positive, noble, beautiful, true, right, pure and excellent things.
- 9 Put your spiritual learning into practice.
- 10 Show kind concern for other people.
- 11-12 Learn how to be content whatever your circumstances.
- 13 Depend on God for your strength.
- 14 Support each other through the hard times, share your struggles.

### Feelings that drain us

As humans it's not possible to experience positive emotions all the time. We live in an imperfect world and it's important to experience some negative emotions too. Positive emotions are the ones that fill us up, and negative emotions are the ones that drain us, push us down, and deplete our health and happiness.

- Work together in 2-3's or in families, to make a list of 'negative' emotions and experiences.
- After a few moments stop the group and collect their ideas on a flip chart.
- Write one emotion in each group. Encourage each group to contribute an idea. If there are only a few groups, go around the group more than once to gather all the ideas.

Here are the main negative emotions. Make sure they are all listed:

- Shame
- Embarrassment
- Fear
- Stress
- Sadness
- Disgust
- Contempt
- Anger
- Disappointment
- Frustration

**Ask: "When do you think Jesus felt \_\_\_\_\_?" And invite ideas from the group.**

- Sad (When the rich young ruler rejected him, when his friends fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Lazarus died, when he wept over Jerusalem, when Peter denied him).
- Frustrated (When his disciples were afraid in the storm?).
- Betrayed (When Judas betrayed him).
- Angry (When he saw the market place in the temple).
- Disappointed (When only one leper returned to thank him, when his disciples showed lack of faith, when none of the disciples were willing to wash the others' feet).
- Abandoned (When his disciples left him, when he was dying on the cross).

Several of the negative emotions are helpful and protective. Frustration can encourage us to look for better solutions. Fear can help us to run away from danger and protect ourselves and those we love. Positive anger (righteous indignation) can give us the energy to stand up for someone who is being oppressed or bullied. Sadness can help us to grieve appropriately for someone or something we've lost, and to be comforted by those around us.

### Feelings that lift us up

- Work together in 2-3's or families to make a list of positive emotions and experiences that fill you up and 'recharge your batteries'.

- After a few moments stop the group and collect their ideas on a flip chart. Write one emotion or experience per group so that every group can contribute an idea. If you only have a few groups, do a few rounds to gather all the ideas.
- Distribute the handout, 'Happy, Healthy Emotions' which describes the top ten positive emotions as identified by Barbara Fredrickson, and includes supportive Bible verses.

Here are the main positive emotions. Make sure that all of these are on the list you have created:

- Joy
- Peacefulness,
- Love
- Hope/Optimism
- Fun and laughter
- Inspiration
- Being absorbed in something interesting
- Feeling good about a job well done
- Wonder
- Gratitude

**Ask: "When do you think Jesus felt \_\_\_\_\_?" And invite ideas from the group.**

- Love for others – all the time!
- A sense of wonder – when he saw the faith of the Canaanite mother. (Matthew 15:21-28).
- Thankful – when Mary poured perfume on his feet, when people shared food with Him.
- Peaceful – when He rested in the boat, or stayed with Mary and Martha.
- Inspired – when He spent time in prayer
- Joyful – when the Roman centurion believed and his servant was healed. (Luke 7:1-10).

Why do you think it is important for us to have these healthy emotional experiences, too?

### Emotions - invitations to connect

Our emotions are invitations for others to connect with us. Paul talks about this in Romans 12:15; "Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn."

**Say:** 'Think about a time when you experienced a moment of wonder on your own, such as seeing a rare bird, a wild creature, a rainbow, a sunset, the ocean, a butterfly, or even watching an ant or a bee.'

**Then say:** 'Think about a time when you experienced a moment of wonder with a friend or family member.'

How does a moment of wonder feel different when it's shared, and you can wonder together with someone else?

We love it when people laugh with us, and we feel more comforted when we're sad if there are people who stay with us and share in our sadness.

When we show fear, we're inviting others to protect us and help us to feel safe again. When we express disappointment we may hope that people will say something comforting and encouraging, or try to help us out.

In groups or pairs ask people to think about what they would like other people to do when they feel different positive and negative emotions:

- When we're angry we would like people to...
- When we're disappointed we would like people to...
- When we're frustrated we would like people to...
- When we're...

### Experiencing healthy emotions together

- Invite the group to move into the space where you have set up the interactive tables.
- It's helpful if families and couples visit the tables together, and any people without families can form groups of 2-3 people to explore the activities.
- The aim is for everyone to reflect on different healthy emotions, enjoy sharing them with each other, and begin to think how they could experience more of these positive emotions in their families and lives.
- Remind people how long they have for the activity.
- Remind them when they are half way through the allocated time, and when they are five minutes from the end.

### Positive emotion activity tables

This is an interactive part of the workshop, where people can experience some positive emotions in fun and simple ways.

The objectives of this section are to:

- Provide hands-on experiences about positive emotions.
- Encourage families and friends to talk about positive emotions and how to nurture them.
- Offer simple ways families and individuals can include positive and uplifting experiences in their every day lives.

### How to set up the tables

- Read through all the instructions below.
- Download/print off the activity table instruction cards.
- Gather the simple materials needed for each table – or delegate the different table preparations to various members of your team.
- If possible, set the tables up in a different room to the place where you will be presenting. But you can set them up around the edges of your room if you have one space to use.
- Set up the tables before the workshop to enable smooth transitions.
- Set up the peaceful area in a well-signposted but separate room from the main activities to preserve the serene atmosphere.

## 1. Nurturing Hope Making a hope candle

'FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,'  
DECLARES THE LORD, 'PLANS TO PROSPER YOU  
AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU  
HOPE AND A FUTURE.'  
JEREMIAH 29:11

### Needs:

- Stack of plain paper
- Pencils and erasers
- Paper scissors and marker pens
- Sample hope candle

### What you do:

- Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half vertically, to make a tall shape.
- Draw and cut the top of this tall shape to look like a candle by creating a flame and then rounding the top corners.
- Now you should have a folded card that looks like a candle.
- Fill it with Bible verses, experiences, encouragement and anything else that will give you hope when you feel discouraged.
- Keep it somewhere safe and add new ideas to it.

### Nurturing hope:

- What thoughts and memories keep you going when times are hard?
- How do other people help you to keep your hope nurtured and alive?
- Do you know anyone whose hope candle might be burning low? How can you encourage them?

## 2. Filled with Wonder

YOUR WORKS ARE WONDERFUL, I KNOW THAT  
FULL WELL.

PSALM 139:13,14.

### Needs:

- Beautiful natural items such as:
- Shells, stones, fresh flowers,
- Fruit and vegetables
- Feathers and safe seedpods
- Books of beautiful nature pictures.

### What you do:

- Choose an object from the table.
- Explore the object for at least 2 minutes.
- Find three things about the object that fill you with wonder.
- Introduce your objects to each other and describe the three things that fill you with wonder.
- Thank God for the millions of wonders hidden in His creation.

### Experiencing wonder everyday:

- Look for God's wonders wherever you go.
- Tell each other about the wonders you've discovered during the week.
- Keep a wonder journal.
- Share moments of wonder through your favorite social media channels.
- What other ideas do you have for experiencing more wonder together?

## 3. Feeling peaceful

PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I GIVE YOU.  
I DO NOT GIVE TO YOU AS THE WORLD GIVES. DO  
NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED AND DO  
NOT BE AFRAID.

JOHN 14:27

### Needs:

- Items to make a peaceful room
- Candles, pillows, Bibles, concordances, pens, index cards, peaceful pictures, soothing instrumental worship music
- Write peaceful Bible verses on index cards and leave them on the table before the activity.

### What you do:

- Enter the peaceful place quietly.
- Be still and remember that God is very close to you.
- Listen to what He wants to say to you.

- What helps you feel peaceful?
- What Bible verses fill you with peace?
- Write your favorite peaceful Bible texts onto index cards and leave them on the table for others to read and take away.
- Choose a Bible verse to take away with you. Read when you need to experience God's peace.

### Experiencing peace every day:

- Where do you go to find a peaceful place to be with God?
- What helps you feel peaceful?
- Which Bible verses do you find most soothing and helpful when you feel troubled?
- How can you find a place to be still with God for at least 5 minutes a day?

## 4. Appreciating each other

BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE. HONOR  
ONE ANOTHER ABOVE YOURSELVES.  
ROMANS 12:10

### Needs:

- Star-shaped sticky notes, large paper stars, or stars printed on plain copy paper
- Pens, pencils and erasers

### What you do:

- Pick up some paper stars.
- Write short notes of personal appreciation on the stars and give one to each person in your family or group.
- Think about the the kind and special things they do well. Think about their spiritual gifts and appreciate how they use them for God.

### Appreciating each other every day:

- Aim to say something specifically appreciative to each person in your family, or one of your friends or colleagues, every day.
- Make a list of some of the different ways you can show appreciation to each other, such as sending a text, writing a card, leaving a surprise message on a sticky note, giving them a tiny treat, telling them how much they mean to you.

## 5. Comfort

PRaise BE TO...THE FATHER OF COMPASSION  
AND THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO  
COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TROUBLES, SO THAT

WE CAN COMFORT THOSE IN ANY TROUBLE  
WITH THE COMFORT WE OURSELVES RECEIVE  
FROM GOD.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-5

**Needs:**

- Small squares of colored paper, such as sticky notes, squares of craft paper, pages from a rainbow colored note-block, etc.
- Marker pens.
- Paper glue sticks.
- Plain copy paper.
- Optional - laminator and pouches.

**What you do:**

- Create a patchwork of colored paper squares. Do this on your own or with your family.
- Choose colored squares and write one comforting idea on each square of paper.
- Stick all your squares onto a sheet of paper to make a paper 'quilt'.
- Take your paper 'quilt' away with you as a reminder to provide warm comfort for each other when life is tough, sad and painful.
- You might like to laminate your 'quilt' or cover it with adhesive film.

**Experiencing comfort:**

- When did someone comfort you well?
- What did they do and say?
- How do you like to be best comforted?
- How do you know when someone in your family is sad and needs comforting?
- How can your friends and family tell when you are sad and need comforting?

**6. Gratitude**

GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THIS IS  
GOD'S WILL FOR YOU IN CHRIST JESUS.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

**Needs:**

- 26 letter squares from a game, or a magnetic letter toy.
- A small fabric bag.
- Blank greeting cards, marker pens, collage materials and paper glue, etc.

**What you do:**

- Take turns pull a letter out of the bag.

- Think of at least 3 things to thank God for beginning with your letter. If you pick an 'X' think about words that begin with 'eX', as in 'excitement'.

**Optional:**

- If there are any card-making supplies on the table you can use to make a thank you card for God.
- Write Him a note thanking Him for all the things you are grateful for right now. Your card is like a prayer of thankfulness to Him. He sees and knows what you have written to Him.

**Experiencing gratitude everyday:**

- Talk about all the things you have to be thankful for.
- Say thank you to someone else every day.
- Keep a thank you diary and write at least three things you're thankful for every day.

**7. Inspiration Trophies**

FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER  
IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER  
IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER  
IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE - IF  
ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY -  
THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

**Needs:**

- Plain paper.
- Marker pens.
- Pencils and erasers.

**What you do:**

- Think about someone who inspires you.
- It might be a family member, a friend, a famous person, a missionary, a Bible character.
- Design a trophy for them. Perhaps you could create a shape that expresses what you find inspiring.
- Write their name on the trophy, and the reasons why and how they inspire you.
- Show your trophies to each other and talk about the people who inspire you to develop your character and nurture your spiritual gifts.

**Being inspired:**

- What inspires you most?
- What have other people inspired you to do?
- How do you find inspiration when you need it?
- How can you help to inspire each other?

## 8. Interesting...

THE WIFE OF NOBLE CHARACTER IS ONE WHO PURSUES HER INTERESTS AND DEVELOPS HER SKILLS WELL.

PROVERBS 31:10-31

### Needs:

A variety of interesting and absorbing activities such as:

- Bible and nature puzzles
- Interesting photographic books
- Interesting books and Sabbath activities for children
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Appropriate crafts, such as cards and bookmarks, etc.

### What you do:

- Look at the puzzles, books and activities on the table.
- Choose something that you find interesting and explore it.

### Talk about it:

- What are the positive activities that you enjoy doing that make you lose all sense of time? E.g. Bible study, hobbies, reading, gardening, running, being creative.
- Why do you think it's good for us to learn new skills, be creative and do interesting things?
- What are the positive activities you do that make you feel better when you have had a tough day?

## 9. Being kind

BE KIND AND COMPASSIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER. EPHESIANS 4:32.

### Needs:

- Plain paper
- Marker pens
- Pencils and erasers

### What you do:

- Draw around your hand on a sheet of paper.
- On the palm of your hand outline write about a time someone was especially kind to you. What did they do and how did their kindness make you feel?
- On each finger write one thing you could do to be kind to someone else in the next month.
- Make a specific plan to carry out these special acts of kindness.

### Everyday kindness:

- Apart from dying to save us, what are the different ways that Jesus showed kindness to others?

- How can you be kind to everyone you meet?
- How do you feel when you have been kind?
- Being kind to others is one of the best ways to experience the joy and peace that Jesus wants us to experience, and it helps other people to feel happy too.

## 10. Smiles and Laughter

THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING, AND A SEASON FOR EVERY ACTIVITY UNDER THE HEAVENS...A TIME TO LAUGH.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1,4

### Needs:

- At least 10 pictures of amusing animals

### What you do:

- Look at the pictures of the funny animals.
- Which one do you think is the funniest?
- Work together with your family or friends to arrange these pictures in order from the least funny to the most funny.

### Experiencing laughter

- What makes you laugh most – is it funny animals, funny stories, funny movies, being tickled, having a happy time with your family?
- Can you guess what makes the other people in your family laugh most? Or what makes your friends laugh?
- How can you help other people smile and laugh more often?
- Tell each other about something funny that happened to you.

## 11. Love

1 CORINTHIANS 13

### Needs:

- Sheets of plain paper
- Marker pens
- Pens
- Pencils

### What you do:

- Draw a large heart on a plain piece of paper.
- Inside the heart write all kinds of things that people do that make you feel loved.
- Then circle them in different colors:
- Doing something kind and thoughtful – blue
- Saying kind things – red

- Giving you something – green
- Spending time with you – orange
- Hugging you – brown
- Making you feel very special – purple
- Something else – black
- Look at the colors you have used for circling and see which ones you used the most.
- Look at the loving actions that the rest of your family have circled most. What can you learn about showing love to each other from doing this activity?

#### **Talk about it:**

- Tell each other about a time when you felt especially loved by them or someone else.
- Complete the sentence... ‘The most loving thing anyone could do me for me this week would be to...’

## **12. Experiencing Joy**

A HAPPY HEART MAKES THE FACE CHEERFUL.  
PROVERBS 15:13

#### **Needs:**

- Large sheets of flip chart paper or wall paper
- Or a large white board
- At the top of the paper or board write the phrase, ‘I feel joyful when...’
- Marker pens or white board markers

#### **What you do:**

- Encourage everyone in your group or family to talk about the times when they feel happy and joyful.
- Invite them to write something that helps them to feel joyful on the paper or white board.
- Invite small children to draw pictures of the things that make them feel joyful.
- If you use paper you can create a joyful poster together that you can keep and pin on a bulletin board.

#### **Experiencing joy:**

- When have you felt really happy recently?
- What was happening?
- Why do you think you felt so happy?
- How could you experience more of these happy moments, and how could you share more of this happiness with other people, especially those who are sad and lonely?
- Thank God for every moment of sheer joy.

## **Balancing healthy emotions**

### **HELPING CHILDREN (AND OURSELVES) WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS**

#### **Show by example**

The most important way for children to learn about feelings and how to express them is by watching their parents and other adults. We can help them to better manage their emotions by showing our feelings, talking about our own emotions, and managing them appropriately. If you're sad, tell your child you're sad, explain simply why you are sad, and then tell them what you plan to do to help you feel better. Or if you're angry with your child, calmly tell them that you are feeling angry, why you're feeling angry, and what you and your child can do together to mend the situation. This helps your child know how to name and express their feelings by talking rather than by having tantrums.

#### **Develop an emotional vocabulary**

You can help children to develop an emotional vocabulary even before they start to talk! But any time is a good time. When we have words to describe our feelings we can tell each other what we are feeling instead of sulking or throwing tantrums. Use words to describe what your child might be feeling. ‘You're looking sad. It's sad to say goodbye when we have to leave our friends.’ ‘It's very frustrating when your little brother pulls your train set to pieces. It can make you feel quite cross inside. Here, let me help you fix it again.’

#### **Respond to the feelings under the behavior**

Instead of ‘reacting’ to your child's misbehavior, respond to the negative feelings that are fueling their actions. Keep in mind that most of a child's behavior is an expression of their emotions. When they are calm and happy they will play peacefully and happily. When they are distressed, and don't know how to talk about it, they are much more likely to hit out, smash toys, kick, scream and yell. As a parent it is so easy to focus on the behaviors rather than the feelings. So we might become angry with the child, and that will only add to their distress and the complex emotions they are trying to manage, and make it more difficult for them to calm down and talk. But if you see Tammy throwing her toys around, or about to hit her little brother, ask yourself: ‘I wonder if Tammy is feeling sad, lonely, frustrated, hungry or tired?’ When you have

thought about why Tammy might be feeling distressed you could say something like: “Tammy, it looks to me as if you might be feeling a bit sad because your tower fell down? Is that right?” Tammy is more likely to calm down when she feels understood and when she feels close to you.

### **Asking and listening**

Ask people about how they feel and listen to what they have to say. Don't tell them they shouldn't have those emotions. Put yourself in their shoes, understand and accept their feelings. This can help them to manage their difficult feelings better. If they sense that you don't understand their feelings, or that you're critical, this can add to their distress and make it even harder for them to manage their emotions. So rather than saying to your child: 'Don't fuss about not going to Tommy's party. I'm sure there'll be other parties soon!' you might say: 'You're disappointed that Tommy didn't invite you to his party. I know how sad it feels when your friends leave you out of their fun.'

Invite people to talk when you think something is bothering them. 'It looks as if you might be worried about something. Would you like to talk about it?' Listen to them carefully, and then help them to find their own solutions. Ask them about their ideas for solving the problem and help them to think about what would work best. This teaches them to manage their fears and worries

### **A little understanding goes a long way**

It's important to let your child or friend know that you understand their feelings. Knowing their feelings are understood can help them to calm down a little. It can also help them to feel supported and cared for. Once they know their feelings have been accepted and understood, you may be able to lead them to think about another time when they managed their negative emotions well. 'I can see that you're beginning to feel a bit scared about going to your swimming class. Remember a couple of weeks ago when you felt scared, and then you stopped being scared when you remembered how much fun you had playing the ball game in the water? I wonder what fun things the teacher will do today?'

### **Catch them managing their emotions well**

Tell your child when you've noticed how well they are trying to manage their emotions. When you notice their efforts and give them positive feedback, they know they are on the right track and they feel motivated to manage their emotions well next time. Say things like, 'I noticed how still you were when the big dog bounced up to you. I

think you were trying really hard to be brave.' 'Well done for staying calm and not getting angry with your sister when she scribbled on your picture.'

### **Set clear limits**

Sometimes, however hard we try, children can become overwhelmed by their feelings, and they may hit out or yell, or behave in unsafe or inappropriate ways. When this happens, acknowledge their feelings but set clear limits. 'I know that you're really angry that we can't go to the park today, but it's not OK to throw your toys around.'

### **The power of distraction**

Help your friends, family members and children to distract themselves when they are bothered about something. Doing a puzzle, making something, reading a happy book, helping with the dinner, going for a walk with you, or even just having a drink of water can help them to feel calmer again and focus on something else. (Philippians 4:8).

### **No shame**

Never shame someone for having negative emotions, or tease them about being afraid. Treat them with respect and don't call them names when they are angry, sad or afraid, such as Hothead, Crybaby or Scaredy-Pants. It's very important that children don't grow up believing that negative emotions are wrong, because this will add extra guilt and shame onto their heavy pile of difficult and complex feelings. They will be less likely to tell you when they are struggling with their negative feelings if they have been teased or rejected when they expressed them in the past. If they don't feel able to talk about their emotions they may hide them and not let you know when they really do need your emotional support. (Romans 12:10).

### **Be honest**

When you know your child is going to experience pain (e.g. when having a shot or a blood test) tell them it will hurt. Otherwise they may experience more distress and an increase in negative emotions when they discover that you lied to them. They will also learn not to trust what you say about emotions, feelings and pain. Try saying something like: 'You are going to have an injection soon. I am very sorry that it will hurt a bit, but probably only for a little while. Because it will hurt, I am going to be here with you to help you feel better, and I'll hold you until the pain goes away again.'

### **Be aware**

Stay closely connected to each person in your family. Notice if someone is withdrawing socially, eating

differently, looking sad, struggling, becoming irritable, or behaving in ways that are causing you concern. It may be enough to notice, listen, care, support and help them to experience more positive emotions. But if you become increasingly concerned, or if they remain sad or stressed for more than a few days, it's important to seek help from your doctor, a counselor, a guidance teacher, pastor, etc.

## **Nurturing positive emotions**

### **Model happiness**

Show your child how to enjoy positive emotions by the way you live and speak and act. Express your thankfulness, look for the positive things in life, laugh and smile; take time out to calm down and recharge your energies, talk about your faith in positive and hopeful ways, share answers to prayer, be kind to others, share moments of wonder. Discover what nurtures your positive emotions, blend them into your life, and they will naturally spill over into the lives of your children and become part of their lives and attitudes.

### **Variety**

Give plenty of opportunities for yourself and your children to discover what nurtures each of your positive emotions. Everyone is different, and they need to explore a wide range of activities and hobbies to find what they enjoy the most and to discover their own unique gifts and talents. Help each person find the activities that inspire him or her and make them feel peaceful, loved, hopeful and happy.

### **Be kind**

One of the best 'medicines' for depression is to make other people feel happy too. Help your child think of different ways they can be kind at home, at school, at church and within your local community. When they have kind ideas, help them put their ideas into action. (Luke 6:35).

### **Laughter**

A cheerful heart is good medicine. (Proverbs 17:22). Laughter also opens our minds to new possibilities. So having fun helps our brains to learn more easily, to find creative solutions to our problems, to make friends, to create a happier life, and to build our resilience. Find out what makes each person in your family laugh, and get him or her laughing before you help them to learn something new, or before they leave the house in the morning. Create your own crazy, funny rituals to help distract each other from difficult feelings.

### **Happy memories**

Encourage your friends and family to remember happy times. Make the most of your happy memories by making photo albums, looking at photos together, making memory jars filled with things collected during a vacation, drawing pictures about happy times, writing stories about them, or creating a positive journal of happy memories. Happy memories can help us through sadder times. Thank God for the happy memories. (Psalm 105).

### **Peace and quiet**

Help everyone in your family find some quiet space and time where they can be still and think. Lives can be very busy today and we all need space to recover by finding a quiet place to pray and reflect on feelings and experiences. It can even help to plan a quiet time for everyone in the house. Perhaps it can be before or after family worship. Try to have one place in your home where you can sit and be still without being distracted by the media, or things that need to be tidied. Play soothing music, give each other hand or back massages, or even blow bubbles, because breathing in deeply, and blowing out slowly helps to relax the body, and bubbles tend to fill us with a few moments of wonder and playfulness too. (Psalm 46:10).

### **Be grateful**

Nurture thankfulness in yourself and your child. Find things to be thankful for as often as you can. You can look for things to be thankful as you drive or walk along the road, as you move from room to room in your home, as you think back on the day, or when you sit down to each together. Encourage children to say thank you as often as possible, to write thank you notes, and to make thank you cards for people. Try to thank one new person a week. Maybe it's the neighbor who has planted a lovely flower garden, or the nurse in the doctor's surgery, or the person who picks up the litter down your street. (Psalm 107:1).

### **Choose to be inspired**

Inspire yourself and your children by reading biographies or watching documentaries about inspiring people, such as David Livingstone, Dr. Ben Carson, and other famous missionaries, leaders, or people who overcame incredible challenges. If possible, take your children to concerts, science festivals, art galleries, and other places where they can be inspired by great human achievements. Study and explore the lives of great people in the Bible. Make this fun and creative and look for the faith and character strengths that enable God to use these people in amazing ways. (Hebrews 11).

### Make a positive list

List all the things that make you or your child feel positive and blessed, and blend them into your lives as often as possible. Pause to enjoy the positive emotions whenever they happen, and thank God for them. These positive emotions will help you live your lives more abundantly, and help you to be stronger, more hopeful and more resilient when you face life's challenges. (Psalm 103:2).

### Checking in

It's important to check regularly how you and everyone else in your family are feeling. This will help you to know if someone might be struggling, feeling sad, or feeling overwhelmed by too many negative and draining emotions. If someone seems to be staying at a low level for more than a week it's a good idea to keep a close eye on them, and help them to find positive ways to feel better.

- Some families check in every day around the dinner table.
- Some check in once a week on Friday nights.
- Some families prefer to do this at bedtime.

Find out what works best for you and your family.

### Lows and highs

Invite each person to describe the lowest moment of his or her day. It will usually be a time when they experienced one of the negative or draining emotions. After they describe this moment, invite each person, or one person, to respond to them in a kind, caring and understanding way. Then invite each person to describe the best or the highest moment of their day. This will usually be a time when they experienced one of the healthy, positive emotions. Celebrate and be happy with them! Share in their moment of wonder and joy!

### The Happy Scale

Draw or print a line with a scale from 0-10, where 0 is very, very unhappy and 10 is very, very happy. With younger children it may be easier to make the scale from 1-5 instead. Use the scale to ask everyone to measure how he or she is feeling. Then ask what they think will help them get to the next highest number, and how you could help them to move higher up the happy scale.

### W.W.W. or What went well?

At the end of the day, at bedtime, or during the evening meal, ask each person: "What went well today?" Then ask them: "What did you or other people do to help it go so well?"

You could also ask: "What didn't go so well today?" Acknowledge and comfort the difficult emotions, and then ask: "What did you learn from that experience? And what might make it work better next time?"

### Colors

Create a small collection of solid-colored buttons, paper or felt squares or circles, or even paint cards/chips. Include every color of the rainbow, plus black, white, grey, teal/turquoise, dark brown, tan, and even gold, silver and pearly ivory. Scatter them on the table. Let each person choose a color to represent how he or she have felt during the day. Invite each person to say why he or she chose that color. Respond to each person's story with interest and compassion.

### Daily Gratitude

At the end of each day ask person to say three things from the day that they are most thankful for. Write them all on a calendar or diary and encourage people to be grateful for small and unusual things, too.

## THINKING ABOUT IT

How do your family check in with each other emotionally, and which of these ideas would you also like to try?

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### Closing activity and reflections

- Distribute the handouts that help people to think about how to have more positive and healthy emotions in their own lives and families. Allow time for them to begin filling them out.
- Ask people to share a couple of key insights and inspirations they have had during the workshop with a partner or family member.

### Closing prayer

Close with a prayer thanking God for our emotions. Ask Him to help us nurture our own positive emotions as well as those of the people in our families, schools, churches, workplaces and communities.

### Reference

Frederickson, G. (2009). *Positivity*, New York, Crown Publishers.

## Healthy, Happy Emotions

These are the top ten positive emotions identified by Barbara Fredrickson and described in her book, 'Positivity'.

Emotion	Description and Bible verses
Laughter / Amusement	Enjoying the positive humor of funny situations and experiences, laughing with other people, not laughing at other people's distress. A cheerful heart is good medicine. Proverbs 17:22. There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...a time to laugh. Ecclesiastes 3:1,4.
Awe and wonder	A sense of amazement at the beauty and intricacy of God's creation and artistry. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:13,14.
Thankfulness	Being grateful for the gifts we receive from God and other people, and for the good things in our lives. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess. 5:18.
Hope	Believing that things can change for the better, especially when things are difficult right now. 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' Jeremiah 29:11, NIV.
Inspiration	Being inspired by God's love and wisdom. Being inspired by the great and noble acts of other people. Being motivated to reach higher goals. Philippians 4:8. Psalm 104 (inspired by God's works).
Joy	Having a sense of pure delight and happiness. A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit. Proverbs 15:13.
Interest	Being curious and wanting to discover more about something, learning something new, or losing yourself in a positive or creative activity. Proverbs 31:10-31 The wife of noble character is one who pursues her interests and develops her skills well.
Feeling valued and appreciated	Knowing that you have done a job well, and that God and other people appreciate what you have done, too. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Eccl. 9:10 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Col. 3:23.
Serenity	Feeling still, peaceful, calm and content. Being free from stress, worries and fear. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18.
Love	Feeling warm, safe and close to another person who cares about you. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

## Experiencing healthy and positive emotions in my own life

Healthy and positive emotion	I could experience more of this healthy and positive emotion in my life by...
Fun & playfulness	
Awe & wonder	
Thankfulness	
Hope/optimism	
Inspiration	
Interest	
Joyfulness	
Delight in a job well done	
Serenity/peacefulness	
Love	

### Experiencing healthy and positive emotions in our family

Healthy and positive emotion	We could experience more of this healthy and positive emotion in our family by...
Fun & playfulness	
Awe & wonder	
Thankfulness	
Hope/optimism	
Inspiration	
Interest	
Joyfulness	
Delight in a job well done	
Serenity/peacefulness	
Love	

### Children's Worksheet - My feelings

Write or draw when you feel happy, sad, angry and loved

I feel most happy when...	I feel sad when...
I feel angry when...	I feel loved when...

# Exceptional Families, Exceptional Needs: Creating Awareness of Members with Disabilities in our Church Family

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER WITH LUANA GREULICH

## The Text

“AND BEHOLD, SOME MEN WERE BRINGING ON A BED A MAN WHO WAS PARALYZED, AND THEY WERE SEEKING TO BRING HIM IN AND LAY HIM BEFORE JESUS, BUT FINDING NO WAY TO BRING HIM IN, BECAUSE OF THE CROWD, THEY WENT UP ON THE ROOF AND LET HIM DOWN WITH HIS BED THROUGH THE TILES IN THE MIDST BEFORE JESUS.”  
LUKE 5:18, 19

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## Theme

Many individuals with disabilities report feeling marginalized in their communities of faith. However, these individuals and their families also report that their faith and church community play an important role in their ability to cope with everyday life. Thus, pastors, members, and the church family as a whole need to develop awareness, compassion, and an accommodating spirit for the members who have disabilities in our church family.

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## Introduction

It is estimated that ten percent of the total world's population, approximately 650 million people, live with a disability. This number is expected to increase as the population ages. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (part of the United Nations) reports that approximately 75 million children are excluded from education due to poverty, gender inequity, disability, child labor, speaking a minority language, being an indigenous person, or living nomadically or rurally. As such, individuals with disabilities are often among the most disadvantaged in their own communities.

A disability can be classified as mobility, mental or visual impairment, speech limitations, deafness whether visible or invisible (Kaufman-Scarborough and Menzel Baker 2005). In other words, being disabled means your ability or capacity is challenged or the disability interferes with typical life activities. The more appropriate term is exceptionality due to the negative perception that an individual who has a disability is disabled; an individual with an exceptionality sounds more positive. Moreover, when one hears the word disability there is a tendency to think of someone in a wheelchair, a person with a guide dog, or other outwardly visible impairment. However, there are those who have disabilities that are not visible or not easily detected such as the person who is hearing impaired, legally blind, or is on the autism spectrum.

Although, people with disabilities comprise a significant group in society, we still tend to think it is an uncommon occurrence or we are uncomfortable with the notion. Of course there is a precedent for such thinking in society in general and in the church. Individuals with disabilities can be traced back to ancient civilizations (i.e. Egypt, Sparta, Rome, China, and the early Christian world), however, documentation of history spans only the last 300 years. Historically in society, people with disabilities have been

viewed as weak, outcast and stigmatized. During Bible times people with disabilities were often thought to have committed a great sin, seen as demon-possessed or “unclean”, needing to be separated from other humanity (Treloar 2000). Today, however, a socio-political perspective for disability emphasizes creating a more adaptive environment that is suitable for people with disabilities. Religious organizations, primarily the church, are well poised to establish such an environment for those who live with disabilities.

### Small Group Activity (10-15 minutes)

**Note:** Facilitator can do one or both activities (Language impaired or Hearing Impaired) as time permits.

#### “CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?” (Hearing Impaired Activity)

##### Materials Needed:

- Disposable Foam Ear Plugs
- 3x5 Note Cards
- Pencils/Pens

##### Activity:

Facilitator distributes a set of ear plugs, note cards, pencils or pens to participants. Participants are asked to put earplugs in ears. Facilitator turns away from participants and reads a list of 10 words for participants to write on notecards. Facilitator asks participants how many words they wrote on their cards.

**List of words:** • Base • Mess • Cause • Mop • Good • Luck • Wag • Rain • Love • Knock

**Debrief:** Participants share how they felt and what they experienced during the activity. Imagine how someone who is hearing impaired may feel during the worship service.

#### “WALKING IN EXCEPTIONAL SHOES” (Activity for Language Impairment or Learning Disabilities)

##### Activity:

- Write your name in cursive for 1 min.
- Now switch and write your name for 1 min with the opposite hand.
- How many times did you write your name legibly.
- Now look at the next slide\* and read the words on the slide, now read them as fast as possible.
- Now look at the same slide and read the color that the word is written in.

##### What can we do?

- What do we know about working with individuals with disabilities?
- They communicate differently.
- They learn differently.
- They see things differently.
- They cope differently.
- Be careful.
- Expectations are everything-just because individuals have a disability does not mean that they are disabled.

**Note:** Facilitator can access the slide :“Walking in their shoes Small Group Activity” in the disc provided with this Planbook.

## “Walking” In The Shoes of the people with disabilities — From Awareness to Compassion

In Luke 5:18,19, we see men finding a way to bring a paralyzed man to hear messages of hope being shared by Jesus. Several things come to mind when we read this text. First, the compassion and concern the men showed towards the disabled man. They seemingly put aside any negative stigma of associating with one who may have been seen as “unclean” or demon possessed and how it would compromise their social status. We also see incredible faith being displayed, on the part of the men and the paralytic man, “and when He [Jesus] saw their faith”

(v. 20), he forgave them their sins and healed the paralytic man.

Perhaps these men had already heard one of Jesus’ messages and were so transformed, they believed that Jesus could do the same for the paralyzed man. Their excitement must have been so palpable that a man who had been paralyzed, perhaps since birth, was given hope of the possibility of being healed. But the emphasis here in this seminar, is not solely on the faith and the healing of the paralytic, but the compassion shown by these men. As soon as we accept Jesus, we are called to be disciples, and the evidence of our faith is seen in our works—our love for one another (John 13:35).

### Small Group Activity (10-15 minutes)

#### “WE ARE THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT”

##### Materials Needed:

- Ball of Yarn
- Scissors

Divide participants into groups of 8-10 people and each group forms a circle. Facilitator holds ball of yarn and wraps one end of yarn around index and middle fingers. Instruct participants to give name and share a few things about self (eg. My name is Sally and I am from Singapore. I have been married for 20 years and have two daughters, etc.)—facilitator shares first. If another participant hears something that is the same as the speaker’s experience, they call out “me too” and the speaker throws the ball of yarn to that person (if two or more people respond choose one to throw yarn to). When the next person catches the ball of yarn, they tie the yarn around two fingers and then share name and experience. Continue until everyone in circle has shared at least once, but as time permits, participants could share a few times. At the end there should be a web of yarn connecting all the participants to one another. Have participants pull back on their end of the web or string and feel how connected they are to one another. Have participants move a few steps inside the circle in see how web is loosened or weakened.

Debrief possible themes:

- We are all connected in some way
- We are more alike than we are different
- We don’t need to be afraid of our differences—we are still united despite our differences
- Our connections make us more aware of our different needs
- We are stronger as a community when we recognize our responsibility to one another
- The community is weaker when we are not committed to one another

**Note:** If there are participants who are disabled and unable to participate without assistance, the facilitator can assign another participant to be a “buddy” or helper.

Individuals with disabilities and their families need the compassion shown by the men in this Bible story. Had the story been written today, more than likely it would have included women. As such, all who are a part of the church are called to come into an awareness of the needs of the those who live with a disability. Contemporary research affirms that faith is an integral part of the human experience. For many living with a disability, faith is elemental in their lives and they consider their faith tradition as a stabilizing force (Speraw, 2006). Many people with disabilities report using their spiritual beliefs as an adaptive resources and as a way of finding meaning for their disability. Like other believers, they too, want to glorify God with their lives and want opportunities to be of service within and outside of the church. People with disabilities are just like non-disabled people: “we are the same, but different”.

### Moving Beyond Compassion

“IF YOU JUDGE PEOPLE YOU HAVE NO TIME TO LOVE THEM.”

MOTHER TERESA

While people with disabilities and their families see the church as essential in the development and nurturing of their spiritual beliefs, many believe that the church is limited

in its ability and readiness to minister to their needs. Thus it is essential that the church move from compassion to finding ways to better meet the needs of the members with disabilities of the family.

We can approach this from a family systems theory perspective. A system can be defined by an identifiable whole that is made up of several interrelated parts (Balswick and Balswick, 2014). Looking at the church through a systems approach allows us to see the dynamics at work in the (church) family and how they influence others in the family. Families are best understood as interconnected and interdependent that cannot be understood in isolation. Every member has a responsibility to the “family” as a whole.

So how can the church family better meet the needs of our “family” members who live with disabilities and their families? How do we move beyond compassion and become more inclusive of all in the church family? We begin by following Jesus’ example of ministering to the disabled—He noticed them, prayed for them, and ministered to them.

Let’s visualize a framework of moving from awareness, to compassion, to ministry/family inclusion.

Illustration 1



We start with acknowledging one another; become aware of our similarities and differences. Some people with disabilities believe that non-disabled people are afraid of people with disabilities—afraid of their differences and afraid of making a mistake in relating to them. Awareness allows us to step outside of our comfort zone and acknowledge others in our

surrounding. It is a fallacy to believe that we should ignore another person’s differences—that is not diversity sensitivity. There is nothing wrong with telling someone that they have on a pretty yellow shirt even though your shirt is white. It becomes egregious if we treat someone differently because they have on a yellow shirt or if we ignore them because

they are not wearing the same color shirt as one's own. In acknowledging others, we affirm them and begin to celebrate the similarities and differences between us.

From awareness, we are moved to compassion. Compassion does not mean pitying or feeling sorry for the other person. Compassion is feeling empathy for another person who is dealing with challenges along with feeling a deep desire to help alleviate their suffering. In some ways our compassion actually pushes us to awareness which in turn pushes us back to compassion. Ellen White says in *Acts of the Apostles*, "Divine love makes its most touching appeals to the heart when it calls upon us to manifest the same tender compassion that Christ manifested."

Our compassion then moves us to ministry or family inclusion. Once we become aware, and show compassion, ultimately we need to transition into ways in which we can accommodate members with disabilities in the family and/or better meet their needs. When Jesus healed the

disabled man, He told him, "rise, take up your bed and go home" (Luke 5:24). The newly healed man immediately did what Jesus told him and then went on to "glorify" God. He and those who brought him went on to share with others the "extraordinary things" they had experienced (v.25). The same should be true of those of us who profess to be Christians. When we have had an encounter with the Savior, we are thus propelled, not only to share the good news of God's healing powers and deepen our faith, but to put our faith to work

### Ministry to Members with disabilities of the Church Family

Our intention in this seminar is to create awareness, deepen compassion, and begin thinking about the special needs of members in our church family who are disabled in some way or another. We are not giving steps on how to start a disability ministry, however, this resource can serve as a precursor to starting a disability ministry in your church. Illustration 2 is a mind map that can serve as a launch pad for ministry to members with disabilities and their families.

Illustration 2



## Small Group Activity (10-15 minutes)

### “WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?”

Divide participants into groups of 8-10. Select a recorder and/or spokesperson for the group. Have the group identify what disabilities each church has in its membership. Discuss/describe each disability while recorder is taking notes.

Display a powerpoint slide of the mind map in Illustration 2. Have each group brainstorm about what else should be added to the mind map. What changes or additions are needed at your church in order to minister to the needs of members who are disabled, especially those identified. What does the church need to do better to accommodate these disabilities? Ideally, there would be members with disabilities in attendance. Be sure to listen to their voices and let them assist in helping to provide better services for them.

Debrief with the entire group. Have each group spokesperson share ideas from group.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Oliver, W & E. (2015). *Real family talk: Answers to questions about love, marriage and sex*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, p. 32.
- <sup>2</sup> White, E. G. (1952). *The Adventist home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, p. 105.
- <sup>3</sup> Stanley, S. M. (2005). *The power of commitment: A guide to active, lifelong love*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 23.
- <sup>4</sup> White, E. G. (1952). *The Adventist home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, p. 15.

### Additional Resources

North American Division

Disability Ministries:

<http://www.nadadventist.org/article/1073742476/ministries-services/ministries/disabilities-ministries>

Real Family Talk with

Willie and Elaine Oliver, Season 4:  
<http://realfamilytalk.hopetv.org>

# A Christian Perspective on Watching Secular TV Programming

S. JOSEPH KIDDER & DAVID PENNO

## The Text

“FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE--IF ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY--THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

influences how they view the world and shapes their perception of God. Although a few families have opted to eliminate the viewing of all TV programming, this is becoming more difficult with the proliferation of media. So Christian parents need to both manage TV program viewing in their homes, and teach their children how to manage their personal viewing habits. Parents can lead the way by modeling this in their own homes.

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## Introduction

This article is designed to help parents educate their children how to manage the viewing of television (TV) programming from a Christian perspective. We will address the viewing of TV programming through the various media available today. Although people use the traditional TV set less, research indicates that they watch more programming via a variety of sources (TV sets, iPads, internet, etc.). The principles addressed in this article also apply to movies in the theater, videos on YouTube, and other visual media.

Television programming has a powerful impact on the minds of children today. It

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## Research on Viewing TV Programming

According to research conducted by the University of Michigan Health System in 2010<sup>1</sup>, on average, children ages 2-5 spend 32 hours a week watching television broadcasts, DVDs, DVR recordings, videos, and using game consoles. Kids ages 6-11 spend about 28 hours a week in front of the TV. The researchers also reported that 71% of 8-18 year-olds have a TV in their bedroom. Media technology now offers more ways to access TV content via the Internet, cell phones, iPads and tablets; today 41% of TV viewing is through these alternative avenues. This has led to an increase in time spent viewing TV content, even though watching on a traditional TV set has declined. So there is an even greater need to manage the TV viewing of children.

The same study found that in “53% of households of 7th-12th graders there are no rules about TV watching.” Also, many parents encourage their toddlers to watch television as a pseudo baby

sitter. Yet TV viewing has been shown to hinder brain development, increase aggressive behavior, and lower school performance among children.

All of this would strongly suggest that Christian parents should manage TV watching in their homes, if they have young children. These children should not be exposed to such a powerful influence without responsible control and supervision. Parents who want to raise their children to walk with God will plan accordingly.

### **Biblical Principles**

When dealing with Christian moral and social ethics, it is not enough to evaluate the scientific evidence for and against something; we must also understand those findings in view of the biblical principles and values. Christians must have a commitment to examine the scriptures to identify the basic spiritual values that should inform moral and ethical situations.

Since the Bible does not mention television and its programming, we must search for some guidelines relating to the Christian lifestyle that can be helpful in determining what should be the Christian's attitude and behavior toward television programs. The Christian should be guided by these principles as they decide whether to watch a particular television program or not.

The Bible exhorts Christians to be careful about what enters their minds and thoughts. Paul encourages us to focus our thinking in what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good reputation. (Philippians 4:8). So any TV programing we choose should bring into our minds that which is pure and uplifting, and will aid in our spiritual development. The apostle also states that what we allow to enter our minds changes us. "But we all... beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed in the same image." (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christians need to be careful about what influences their thinking because they will eventually emulate what they watch.

Ellen White describes how Christians should focus their thinking on Jesus: "God desires men and women to think soberly and candidly. They are to ascend to a higher and still higher grade,

commanding a wider and still wider horizon. Looking unto Jesus, they are to be changed into His image. They are to spend their time in searching for the deep, everlasting truths of heaven.... And as they learn of Him, their motives and sympathies become firm and unchanging."<sup>2</sup>

So how should Christian families relate to secular television programming in the home? We will first explore if the worldview of secular television conflicts with the Christian worldview, and then we will describe some principles and practices that can help believers manage the impact of secular programs on their families.

### **Secular Worldview vs. Christian Worldview Television and Secular Thought**

William Johnsson, in *Meeting the Secular Mind*, indicates that a secular mind-set is a polar opposite of the philosophy of a Christian. He states that millions of Americans go to church, but that is rarely displayed on television. "Millions of people pray—but rarely on television. Many people make decisions based on Christian principles—but television overlooks them. On television, people seem to go to church only for a wedding or a funeral. Sometimes church provides the setting for comic interlude. Clergymen tend to be portrayed as inept, blundering, or 'prissy'—sometimes as cheats and liars."<sup>3</sup>

God is rarely mentioned in a positive way on television, although in actual life many people follow him faithfully. In fact, most of the people in the United States believe in God and turn to Him in prayer either regularly or occasionally. "Many will honestly and genuinely voice desperate prayers in situations of fear or extremity. But movies censor out this reflection of real life more often than not."<sup>4</sup>

The worldview and secular environment portrayed on television is influencing Christians; it is virtually impossible to avoid it. Without knowing it or even feeling it, spiritual values may be discarded to embrace those of the secular mind. People may be faithful churchgoers and follow the patterns of the Christian life; but within themselves they have become secularists.

People of influence in the TV industry are attempting to change the worldview of viewers. Ken Matto cites the following:

“If we can start changing attitudes in this country, we can start changing behavior” Grant Tinker, Former Chairman of NBC TV.

“Objectivity is a fallacy...there are different opinions, but you don’t give them equal weight” Robert Bazell of NBC News.

The Lichtman Rothman survey of media leaders concluded that “of today’s leaders...90% favor abortion...91% favor homosexuality...and only 14% attend any kind of church.”<sup>5</sup>

Constant TV watching can shape the Christian to think in secular ways. So we must manage what we watch because it influences our thinking.

### **Television and God**

Perhaps the biggest problem with television is not violence, profanity, or sex, but the absence of God. People on television seem to live, solve their problems, plan for the future, marry, and raise kids without reference to God.

One study published in 1994 assessed “the portrayal of religion on fictional prime time network television; they proceeded to determine the frequency and distribution of religious affiliation, the range of religious behaviors, and the valence (positive or negative), salience (importance), and context (humorous or serious) of the religious behaviors engaged in by speaking characters.”<sup>6</sup> The researchers reviewed 100 episodes over five weeks. They found that “the religious side of characters’ lives is not typically presented on television”. Analyzing 1,462 characters, the researchers found that 5.6% had an identifiable religious affiliation. “Religious activity was infrequently presented. When it was portrayed, it was rarely a central theme in the story-line and it was most often framed as a personal and private activity. This study concludes that the infrequent presentation of religion and spirituality tends to symbolically convey the message that religion is not very important because it is rarely a factor in the lives of the people on TV or the social setting in which they are portrayed.”<sup>7</sup> Though this study was

done in 1990, few would argue that today secular television offers a more positive or accurate view of religion. Indeed, it seems to be worse.

Others claim that TV alters how we perceive reality as Christians. Television facilitates a visual experience that is a highly reinterpreted experience from an artificial perspective. This simulation becomes our own new reality. We abandon the natural world created by God in favor of the one recreated by man. Negative emotions, violence, and carnage get the viewer’s attention faster and hold it longer than the positive, the peaceful, or the beautiful. Therefore, TV focuses on the former, making the latter appear as unusual and infrequent in real life.

Constant television viewing could contribute to Christians becoming people who are blown away by every wind of doctrine and unable to distinguish fact from fiction.<sup>8</sup>

### **Television and the Myths of the World**

Television programming portrays a certain reality and a version of life contrary to the Christian way of life. Television often tells us that happiness can be obtained primarily by material possessions, popularity, or power.

Adults and children see people on television that are beautiful, drive fancy cars, live in magnificent homes, wear the best clothes, and live every imaginable life style in full autonomy, and frequently without accountability for any behavior.<sup>9</sup>

Television and its programming suggest that certain human characteristics, such as being wealthy, good-looking, or physically strong, are the only ways to be successful in society. The Bible, on the other hand, affirms that what matters in life is to know God and to walk with Him (see 1 John 1:6). The message of the Bible is loud and clear: once a person receives God’s gift of grace and salvation, God leads believers to focus on eternal spiritual matters above transitory worldly attachments. Consequently the imitation and mastery of television behavior become the standard by which we can assess success and failure of where we are on our spiritual journey.<sup>10</sup>

Parents frequently work long hard hours at jobs they dislike to acquire luxury while they

drown in massive consumer debt. This workaholic syndrome leads to strained family relationships and divorce. Failing to achieve the computerized and synthesized beauty found in the television world is viewed as a tragedy so profound that young and old alike drift to eating disorders, develop neurosis, and practice self-medication in order to cope.<sup>11</sup>

As children watch television they become products of an image factory that tells them how to behave toward their parents and peers. They are also told what to want, what to ask for, what to expect, and even what to demand from others. It is no wonder that some young people have such a profound sense of entitlement. They come to believe the world should give them many luxuries as a birthright; that parents should pay for cars, clothes, and college; that the latest fashion is what is acceptable; that the beautiful people are more valuable than the average, that good Christians can look and act like Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, Justin Timberlake, or “gangsta” rappers with no moral dilemma; that junk food is the primary food group for most people, or that a happy meal will make you happy.<sup>12</sup>

Gerbner and Gross, from the University of Pennsylvania, have discovered that heavy television viewers have opinions about the world that differ from factual reality. They see the world as having more professionals, athletes, entertainers and detectives than it really has. They think society is more affluent than it is. They see the world as more dangerous than it is and, as a result, are more fearful than light viewers or non-viewers.<sup>13</sup> This causes young people to desire the lifestyle of the rich and famous, while creating fear that controls important aspects of their lives.

### **Television and Christian Moral Values**

Jerry Mander, a former president of CBS television, in his controversial book *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, states that television does not lie sometimes, but all of the time. It lies in its portrayal of life, in its reporting of the news, in its solution to complex problems, and in its debasement of accepted moral values. On the one hand, television legitimizes prejudice, dishonesty, and selfishness; on the other hand, it glorifies perversion of sex, drugs, drinking, and smoking.<sup>14</sup> This constant

corruption of the truth will ultimately influence all and will have a profound effect on morality, way of life, and relationship with God.

Paul affirms that Christians are transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1-2). Reinforcement is important in the process of developing attitudes toward right and wrong. Parents must know how to make competent ethical decisions based on Christian values and principles, and then teach their children to do the same. Parents must be aware that television is another authority figure that can work against this process.

### **Christians Management of TV Viewing**

Is there any place for television in the Christian home? Many see the potential for good in spite of the problems, yet for some Christians the answer is no. There is no simplistic and clear-cut answer to the problem. Moreover, many of those who object to the presence of television do it theoretically, while in practice they watch television programming and allow their children to do the same. So there is a need for guidelines to help families practice a Christian approach to watching secular TV programming.

### **The Control of Television**

Most Christians will continue to view TV programming in their home and elsewhere, and allow their children to watch it. Children must be taught to manage properly what they are exposed to. Television is no exception. It is important that when families choose to have a television, they show and teach children how to manage its viewing. When parents are involved in helping their children understand the nature of television and how to view it with a critical mind, children seem better able to differentiate between real people, realistic characters, and fantasy characters.

Here are some suggestions for those that keep a television in their home.

### **Limit Viewing Time**

An effective means of reducing television consumption among children is to limit its use. This can be done in two ways. One way is to

forbid all television viewing on school days. This removes the pressure on children to rush through homework to watch their favorite programs. Another option is to permit the children to watch television during the week, but restrict its use to a maximum of an hour or two a day. Parents can implement such a plan, provided they present their children with wholesome activities to fill the hours formerly devoted to television. In fact, for most children, a rich social life is more fulfilling and rewarding than television consumption.

### Evaluate the Television Content

Unless we want to leave TV as a medium that applies to our emotions, we must find ways to interact intellectually with what TV delivers. It is the Christian's responsibility "to maintain an informed, critical approach to all media while determining how best to use every medium for the glory of God."<sup>15</sup>

David Marc, an American Civilization professor, offers a provocative outlook by relating that the "distinction between taking television on one's own terms and taking it the way it presents itself is critical. It is the difference between activity and passivity. It is what saves TV from becoming the homogenizing, monolithic, authoritarian tool that the doomsday critics claim it is."<sup>16</sup> We must view TV with an active mind that responds with a Christian worldview. We are responsible for what TV communicates to us.

Here is a list of questions to help the Christian evaluate perceptions of the mass media. It would be helpful to all who wish to leave a television in their home to give some serious consideration to these questions.

1. Does the presentation contribute to the understanding of worthwhile ideas?
2. Does the presentation help to clarify issues of the times?
3. Does the presentation attempt to put the richest thoughts into the clearest language?
4. Does the presentation maintain a balance between emotional and intellectual appeals?
5. Does the presentation accurately portray normal life expectations?
6. Does the presentation draw upon elements of violence, substandard language, or sexual implications to make its point?

7. Does the presentation give evidence of being produced tastefully, thoughtfully, and with some finesse?
8. Does the presentation foster a greater understanding of others and encourage the viewer to treat them with kindness?
9. Does the presentation advance or perpetuate the spiritual values for which one stands?
10. Could the viewer recommend the presentation to a fellow Christian?

### Set an Example

No matter what restrictions parents put on their children regarding to television, they do little good unless the parents have learned to control their own desire to watch television. Children learn from example. "It serves no purpose for a parent to forbid his child from viewing television while he continues to watch without remorse. Such hypocrisy teaches the child to disregard other parental commands."<sup>17</sup> Parents must model for their children proper TV viewing habits.

Many of us need to decide prior to spending time with the medium. This should be done not only for ourselves, but also for our children and grandchildren. Perhaps a good rule for turning on the tube is to "map out" what may be worthy of our attention each day. This means that we will have to spend a few minutes to read about what is available. This will prove beneficial. Instead of automatically activating the power switch as part of a daily routine, regardless of what may be "on", selectivity should be routine.<sup>18</sup>

Here are some suggestions for managing TV viewing:

1. If you do watch, insist on good shows that cultivate good character and moral values.
2. If possible, have only one television set in the house. Do not keep it in a prominent place. When not being used, cover the set or put it away if it's portable.
3. Carefully select programs that will be interesting and informative to the whole family. Do this ahead of time to eliminate random, spontaneous selection. Don't rely on the set as a diversion too often as it will become habitual. Don't let younger children turn on the television without permission.
4. After watching a program, discuss what was

seen with the family. Encourage Christian discernment by asking whether or not the show would have been pleasing to God. Show your children that they have a right and duty to evaluate, not just passively accept, what the TV program offers them. Their standards are those of Jesus Christ and His church in all aspects of their lives.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

We have examined some of the biblical principles and challenges as they relate to the effects of television viewing. Since most Christians will continue to have a television and allow their children to watch it, we propose that parents should control and manage the viewing of television programming by their children. This can be done by limiting time, evaluating the television content, and setting an example.

A good place to end is with the advice of the apostle Paul to the Philippians, “And now, my friends, all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, whatever is excellent and admirable—fill all your thoughts with these things.” (Philippians 4:7-8).

## How to Use This Article

Below are some suggestions how parents can use this article:

1. Ask the child to discuss the pros and cons to watching TV programming.
2. Have children describe possible alternatives to TV that they would enjoy.
3. Discuss with children how what we allow into our minds will influence us for good and for bad.
4. Parents can discuss biblical principles presented in this article with their children.
5. Review the content of this article with their children.
6. For older children, have them write a review of this article.
7. Show benefit of controlling TV programming viewing.

## Notes

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- <sup>3</sup> Johnson, E. (1985). *Meeting the Secular Mind: Some Adventist Perspectives*, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, p. 17.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 17-18.
- <sup>5</sup> Matto, K. (n.d.) *The Dangers of Television*. Retrieved from [http://www.inplainsite.org/html/dangers\\_of\\_television.html](http://www.inplainsite.org/html/dangers_of_television.html). Accessed 05/29/2014
- <sup>6</sup> Skill, T & Robinson, D. (1994). *The Portrayal of Religion and Spirituality on Fictional Network Television*, Review of Religious Research, Vol. 35, No. 3, March, p. 251.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Kappelman, T. (2002). Retrieved from [http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4217905/k.A431/We\\_Are\\_Television.html](http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4217905/k.A431/We_Are_Television.html) Accessed 05/30/2014.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Warholak, G. (1996). Adapted from a pamphlet written by Kevin Perrotta, and published by the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Taken from the *OCA Resource Handbook for Lay Ministries*®, by Orthodox Family Life and the original author(s). Retrieved from <http://www.theologic.com/offweb/curreven/tv02.htm>. Accessed 05/30/2014.
- <sup>14</sup> Mander, J. (1978). *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. New York: William Morrow and Company, p. 216-240.
- <sup>15</sup> Solomon, J. (2002). Retrieved from <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/tv.html>. Accessed 05/30/2014.
- <sup>16</sup> Marc, D. (1996). *Demographic Vistas: Television in American Culture* (Rev. ed.) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 8.
- <sup>17</sup> Schwantes, D. (1979). *Taming Your Television and Other Media*. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, p. 114.
- <sup>18</sup> Solomon, J. (2002). Retrieved from <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/tv.html>, 2002. Accessed 05/30/2014.
- <sup>19</sup> Warholak, G. (1996). Adapted from a pamphlet written by Kevin Perrotta, and published by the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Taken from the *OCA Resource Handbook for Lay Ministries*®, by Orthodox Family Life and the original author(s). <http://www.theologic.com/offweb/curreven/tv02.htm>. Accessed 05/30/2014.

Signs of TV Addiction	
1	You record TV shows that are on the same time the one you are watching.
2	You watch a program with the anticipation of seeing a sinful act, and enjoy it when it comes.
3	You eat your dinner in front of the TV.
4	You neglect your spouse or family time for a TV show.
5	You look forward to a TV show, but you easily neglect spiritual activities.
6	Your conversation is replete with TV reviews and anecdotes.
7	TV replaces your Bible reading, devotion time, or family worship.
8	No one is allowed to speak while the TV is on.
9	You rush home so you will not miss a program.
10	You watch TV late into the night consistently.
11	When company visits, the TV remains on, and you wish they would leave.
12	You let TV do your thinking for you.
13	You turn the TV on the moment you enter a room, or when you awaken in the morning.
14	The TV is on when you are doing your chores.
15	You laugh at the very sin that sent Christ to the cross.
16	You begin to adopt ideas and attitudes contrary to Scripture.
17	You go nowhere but have become a couch potato.

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# LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

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# Sex, Drugs, and Alcohol: What Adventist College Students Say About the Role of Parents and Religion

ALINA BALTAZAR, DUANE MCBRIDE, CURTIS VANDERWAAL  
AND KATHRYN CONOPIO

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The college years often involve experimentation with alcohol and other drugs that can start in the adolescent years and extend during the college years (Misch, 2010). Such behaviors are influenced by decreased parental supervision along with increased interaction with a larger number and variety of peers (Misch, 2010). Three-fourths (75.6%) of U.S. college-age youth have consumed alcohol in the past year, with 57.9% who admit to being drunk over that same time period, one-third meeting the criteria for binge drinking in the previous month (Johnston et al., 2014). Many college students believe heavy drinking is a normal part of their college experience (Luquis, Garcia, & Ashford, 2003). While alcohol is the most commonly used substance, it is not the only substance being used on campuses. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug on college campuses in the U.S., with about one-third (35.5%) of college students reporting marijuana use in the last year (Johnston et al., 2014).

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A large majority of those who are college age in the United States are sexually active; approximately 65% had sex in the last 12 months (American College Health Association, 2011). There are a number of problems associated with various forms of sexual activity, these include multiple sex partners and unprotected sexual activity that can lead to transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies (Centers for Disease Control, 2009).

Research has looked at a number of variables that may influence sexual behavior. Religiosity does not appear to substantially reduce sexual activity; 80% of 18-29 year old unmarried evangelical Christians participate in sexual activity (Albert, 2009). This rate is similar to unmarried adults of the same age at about 88% in their lifetime (Albert, 2009). The use of alcohol and other drugs has been found to increase sexual risk taking among college students (Klein, Geaghan, & MacDonald, 2007).

Research affirms that parents influence their children's drugs, sex, and alcohol behavior in a variety of ways. Close parental monitoring through the adolescent years has been associated with less alcohol and drug use which then indirectly curbs high-risk drinking in the college years (Arria et al., 2008). During the college years, the family makeup and certain characteristics of the students' family during the adolescent years influence later beliefs and behaviors.

Davidson and colleagues (2008) found that intact families, where spouses have remained together and are affectionate towards each other, had a stronger impact on sexual risk behaviors than religiosity.

Andrews University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution located in Michigan, USA, conducts a youth health risk and protective factors survey about every five years since 1990. Researchers report that the results from the latest survey conducted in 2012 are similar to the last few surveys conducted in 2005 and 1999. Results showed much lower participation in drug and alcohol use and premarital sex than the general college population (Helm et al., 2009; Hopkins et al., 2004; Helm et al., 2009; Baltazar, VanderWaal, & McBride, 2012). Data analysis has shown that such variables as religious belief and participation in religious activities close family bonds, and relationships with other adults accounts for lower rates of drug and alcohol use and premarital sex.

Data analysis from the 2012 study show there are particular areas where religion and parents have the biggest impact on alcohol, the most commonly consumed substance on campus. The strongest religion variable was to believe that ‘God wants me to take care of my body by avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and drugs’; in other words, believing that ‘my body is the temple of God’ appears to be a safeguard against alcohol use. Those who strongly agreed with this question were 61% less likely to consume alcohol in the last week. The strongest parenting variable was to believe you can ‘talk to your mother about sensitive issues like drugs, sex, and alcohol’, which resulted in being 30% less likely to consume alcohol in the last week.

For sexual behavior, some of the same variables had similar relationships, with some differences between men and women. Females who are comfortable talking to their mothers about drugs, sex, and alcohol, attend church regularly, read their Bible frequently, or believe God wants them to take care of their bodies are significantly less likely to have multiple sexual partners in their lifetimes. For males, frequency of attending church, reading the Bible, or knowing he can turn to God because he enjoys spending time with Him resulted in being significantly less likely to have multiple sexual partners in a lifetime.

While this information is useful and encouraging, it is important that we tell the rest of the story; hearing from the young people themselves about what they think of drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior with a particular emphasis on the role religion and parents play. Focus group research was conducted during winter of 2013 to better understand the results of the survey.

Andrews University students’ leaders recruited students from psychology, sociology, and family studies classes to participate in one of six focus groups. All participants were undergraduate students of Andrews University. To participate in the study they had to be between the ages of 18-25 and unmarried. Students were asked a list of semi-structured, open-ended questions that explored the reasons why students engaged in specific health risk behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, and sexual behavior. There were a total of 53 participants with 57% females and 43% males. Ethnic composition was 43% White, 25% Black, 15% Latino/a, 11% Asian, and 6% Asian/White.

The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed and common themes were identified and processed. The most common identified themes will be reported here, in order of frequency. A few quotes from the participants have been included for clarification purposes.

When students were asked what they think of alcohol and drug use they reported:

- It is something done at parties or social occasions.
- It is considered a normal part of the college experience.
- Use varies, with some students totally abstaining to others using substances regularly.
- Many of the students reported that they believe that alcohol and drug use is wrong. “I think because around here, it’s taboo.”

When students were asked what influences substance use among college students they reported:

- It is a way of coping with stress, helping them sleep, and a way to escape their problems. “It relieves stress.”
- They reported it is easy to find friends who use or don’t use substance. They denied there was

peer pressure, but they said when students do use substances they are usually with their peers at social occasions.

- There is a certain amount of curiosity in relation to trying substances and they think it is a way to have fun. “You’re tired of being calm and doing things people tell you, and you want to be a bit different and do something bad.”

When group members reflected on why students may binge drink (defined as 5+ drinks in one sitting) they responded:

- It may be accidental because they may not have been aware of how many drinks they have consumed already.
- The person may have an addiction to alcohol.
- It could be a way to escape their problems and numb emotional pain.

When asked what role they felt religion played the most common themes identified were:

- Religion sets moral standards that influence behavior. “I think religion plays a role in that it tempers most religious people from going into drinking or binge drinking.”
- They believe the body is the temple of the Lord so shouldn’t consume harmful substances. “That saying about your body is a temple of God.”
- Religious influence varies depending if the young person has internalized the values that have been taught to them.

The roles parents play include:

- Parents who model not using substances are a good influence on their children. Parents that use substances can model what not to do, especially if the child perceives that their parent’s substance use has been detrimental to them.
- Group members felt parents shouldn’t be too strict or lenient. They felt if parents are too strict then the child might want to rebel, but if they are too permissive, their children may think their parents don’t care if they use substances. When parents implement more authoritative parenting where there is more interaction between the parent and the child regarding rules this also aids in more open communication. “I think it comes down to, when parents give good reasons why they shouldn’t be doing it, not just enforcing a bunch of rules that don’t have any substance

or background to them, so actually having a rationale for the rules, or the things that parents try to implement to their kids.”

- A child’s relationship with their parent was also viewed as important. If you have a close relationship with your parent then you don’t want to disappoint them by doing something you know they don’t want you to do.

There was more variety in the responses to the participants’ perception of sexual behaviors among Adventist college students.

- Sex is considered a taboo subject on campus.
- There is great variation in beliefs about sexual behaviors, from those who will not even kiss before their wedding to those who think casual sex is perfectly fine.
- Students believe there is not enough information regarding foreplay standards. At what point is it going too far?
- There is a double standard where it is more acceptable for males to have sex than females, which showed gender bias since both genders are equally involved.
- Females often feel pressured to have sex in order to keep their boyfriend.
- Group members generally believe that sex is meant for marriage- “That you [should] wait until marriage.”
- Students have difficulties dealing with sexual urges. “Even though they know that it is not right, maybe, they’ve convinced themselves differently.”
- There are some who struggle with masturbation and pornography.
- They are aware that sex can hurt their relationships and their mental health.

Participants identified factors that influenced their perceptions of sex:

- Peers who encourage them to have sex. “I mean, you listen to your peers right? And if they have something to say about it, you’ll listen to it.”
- Media and music that normalizes sex.
- If the couple has been together for a while there is more pressure to have sex.

There are specific ways religion has an influence on sexual behaviors:

- Religious values teach that sex is for marriage. “Cause since I’m a religious person, I understand why God wants you to wait until you are married.”

- If you have religious faith it gives you strength to resist sexual urges that you know are meant for the marriage relationship.
- Participants felt the Bible was not very clear in regards to premarital sex. They don't feel there is a verse that explicitly says, 'Thou shalt not have premarital sex.' The students reported there are plenty of stories where Bible heroes had premarital sex so this sends a mixed message.

Parents play a similar role in influencing sexual behavior as they do in substance use behavior.

- If you have a close relationship with your parents you are not going to want to disappoint them, particularly if you know they want you to wait to have sex until you are married. "There's obviously correlations between the relationship with your parents, and actually with waiting."
- If parents waited until they got married to have sex, it sets a standard and sends a message to their children that if their parents were able to wait, then they can wait.
- It helps if parents send very clear messages regarding their standards regarding sexual behavior. "If your parents don't talk to you about it at all, and just kinda get educated by your peers, almost guarantee that's gonna be worse indication than if your parents discussed it with you."

In conclusion, there are many factors that influence whether young people will use substances or have premarital sex. Our research shows that young people struggle with urges to use substances and have sex and need to learn healthier ways of coping and having fun. The biggest sexual struggles are with masturbation and pornography; how to manage a relationship that progresses to where sexual urges seem overwhelming, and when there is pressure for the female to give in to her boyfriend's desire to have sex or lose the relationship.

Young people believe the Bible sets standards regarding their behavior. The most powerful Biblical message against substance use is believing the body is the temple of the Lord, as shown in the survey and follow-up focus groups. This shows the power of the health message among Adventist youth. Sexual involvement is more complicated. Although the message from the church is that sex should wait for

marriage is clear to them, they feel the Bible isn't explicit on this issue. This means that parents and mentors need to reinforce this message through clear communication and modeling.

Relationships with peers, parents, and God make a difference in the behavior choices of youth. If a young person spends time with peers who don't use substances and are planning to wait until they get married to have sex, they are less likely to engage in these behaviors. In addition, if the youth has a close relationship with parents who clearly state their standards regarding substance use and premarital sex, they are less likely to practice these behaviors. Finally, when the young person has a close relationship with God, they are more likely to care about the religious standards such as, the body is God's temple and sex is for marriage.

Recommendations for family ministry leaders:

- Maintain clear standards while recognizing that youth make mistakes.
- Reinforce the life-affirming value of SDA health principles.
- Encourage a personal relationship with Christ.
- Focus on prevention and minimizing the impact of risky choices.
- Practice love and acceptance for those who struggle in these areas.
- Teach parents the importance of:
  - Nurturing close relationships through family dinners, special outings, and establishing traditions.
  - Early, clear, and repeated communication regarding substance use and premarital sex.
  - Positive parenting where the child has input and understanding of established rules.
  - Modeling the behavior you want in your children.
  - Monitoring media and peer relationships to make sure they are reinforcing the messages you are teaching.

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# Tell It to Your Children

MYRTLE PENNIECOOK

Recently, I visited a certain country for the first time. Entering one of its cities, my attention was drawn repeatedly to huge posters hanging everywhere. These large posters all featured the same person, the national leader, an individual who was celebrating several decades of rule in that country. As I arrived at one of the educational institutions, I saw the same picture again—in every classroom—of the national leader and his wife. When I inquired about this man, I learned how highly respected, honored and loved he is by his people. To hear how the people love their leader and his family, to see the many things they do in order that each citizen and visitor like me can learn about him and the country over which he rules—this had a profound impact on my thinking.

As a Christian Seventh-day Adventist parent and educator, I ask myself: What should I be teaching, what should all educators be teaching—to all students—that each one may learn about our heavenly King Jesus, His kingdom, and His soon return to establish His kingdom forever?

The prophet Daniel provides an answer. Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14 identifies fundamental truths that students need to learn, to love, and to incorporate into their lives about the King of Kings and His kingdom. In these they can place their hope.

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“AS I LOOKED, THRONES WERE SET IN PLACE,  
AND THE ANCIENT OF DAYS TOOK HIS SEAT.

HIS CLOTHING WAS AS WHITE AS SNOW;  
THE HAIR OF HIS HEAD WAS WHITE LIKE  
WOOL. HIS THRONE WAS FLAMING WITH  
FIRE, AND ITS WHEELS WERE ALL ABLAZE.  
A RIVER OF FIRE WAS FLOWING, COMING  
OUT FROM BEFORE HIM. THOUSANDS  
UPON THOUSANDS ATTENDED HIM; TEN  
THOUSAND TIMES TEN THOUSAND STOOD  
BEFORE HIM. THE COURT WAS SEATED,  
AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED. . . .

“I SAW IN THE NIGHT VISIONS, AND,  
BEHOLD, ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN  
CAME WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, AND  
CAME TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS, AND  
THEY BROUGHT HIM NEAR BEFORE HIM.  
AND THERE WAS GIVEN HIM DOMINION,  
AND GLORY, AND A KINGDOM, THAT  
ALL PEOPLE, NATIONS, AND LANGUAGES,  
SHOULD SERVE HIM: HIS DOMINION IS  
AN EVERLASTING DOMINION, WHICH  
SHALL NOT PASS AWAY, AND HIS KINGDOM  
THAT WHICH SHALL NOT BE DESTROYED”  
DANIEL 7:9, 10, 13, 14

*As I meditated on Daniel’s words, I came to the conclusion that parents in the home and teachers in Christian schools should help every student, every son and daughter, all sons and daughters of Christ, to come to know about and commit themselves to the Heavenly King.*

## A Focused Lifestyle

Our lifestyle must be focused on the will of God the Father and Jesus the Son in every possible way. At the end of the road of life, whether it be in one year, five or ten, life will only have meaning through the Almighty God, the one Daniel called “the Ancient of Days” (Daniel 7:9), and His Son Jesus, “the Son of man” (Daniel 7:13)—the King of Kings, the “author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9).

A question for parents and Christian teachers to reflect upon is: What do my children and students learn through my voice about God the Father and Jesus the Son? I find great encouragement in Jochebed’s teaching of her son Moses. Before he could face life’s challenges, she knew he must worship God the Creator.

KNOWING THAT HER CHILD MUST SOON PASS BEYOND HER CARE, TO THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THOSE WHO KNEW NOT GOD, SHE THE MORE EARNESTLY ENDEAVORED TO LINK HIS SOUL WITH HEAVEN. SHE SOUGHT TO IMPLANT IN HIS HEART LOVE AND LOYALTY TO GOD. AND FAITHFULLY WAS THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED. THOSE PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH THAT WERE THE BURDEN OF HIS MOTHER’S TEACHING AND THE LESSON OF HER LIFE, NO AFTER INFLUENCE COULD INDUCE MOSES TO RENOUNCE.  
WHITE, 1903, P. 61

## Filled with Hope and Passion

We must develop hope and passion as citizens of the kingdom of God. An everlasting truth that parents and teachers need to repeat to students is that to Jesus, “the Son of man,” has been given an everlasting dominion. His kingdom shall never be destroyed. We should endeavor to guide students to develop a vision, a hope, a passion of being in that congregation of saints when God establishes His everlasting Kingdom. As the Book of Daniel portrays, no matter how powerful earthly kingdoms seem today, the day will come when they will no longer be in existence.

The final destiny of earthly kingdoms is illustrated by King David in Psalm 73. Here he wonders how it is that the wicked, who do not fear God, who do

no good, always seem to prosper. “When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny” (Psalm 73:16, 17). The progress of these oppressive powers would only be for a short time, then they would be no more. It will be the same with all earthly kingdoms; they will come to an end and the Ancient of days will establish His kingdom forever.

The constant challenge to Christian parents and teachers is to keep alive the Blessed Hope that we await this kingdom. It is ours to learn about it and to live in harmony with the promise of it in our hearts. Course content, meditations, reflections, all aspects of our Christian education enterprise should help students to picture themselves among those who will receive the Lord at His second coming and dwell with Him in His kingdom. Nothing is more important to achieve, nothing is of higher priority in our education program than this.

*As I reflect on this, I ask myself: What adjustments do I need to make in my home, in my life, and in my classrooms as a Christian parent and teacher?*

## Prepared to Stand

We must prepare to stand with the multitudes in the presence of God. As Daniel 7: 9 says, “Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” A teacher’s major aim in education must be to encourage students that one day they will be there. As the Psalmist states, “my eyes are ever on the Lord” (Psalm 25:15). Different writers express the same vision and hope:

- John, the disciple of Jesus who was later isolated at the island of Patmos, visualized the beautiful scene of those standing before the throne (Revelation 14:5).
- Luke, researcher and admirer of Jesus, reminds us, “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).
- King Jehoshaphat, during the time of trouble for his people, brought all Judah—young and old, male and female—as one body to stand “before the Lord” (2 Chronicles 20:13).
- King Nebuchadnezzar, great emperor of the past, wanted the Lord’s faithful followers—Daniel and

his friends—to prepare themselves to stand before him (Daniel 1:5). However, Daniel made clear to him that there is only one King before whom he and his friends would stand. He is the King of Kings, whose kingdom will stand for ever.

*As I reflect on this giant challenge of helping young people to respond to Christ that they may stand before God, my prayer is: Lord please help me and use me as your instrument to be there at your return, along with my loved ones and students.*

### **Assured of Judgment Day Coming and of His Keeping Power**

Teachers must teach students about the day of the Lord, the Judgment Day (Daniel 7:10). The final test of the world will be given by God Himself. This age has its levels of accountability, its standards and policies, an established decision-making process. All these are man-made. Yet God's Judgment Day will be a time of testing and evaluation of all humanity. The criteria for this day of accountability—the great Judgment Day—are established in the Word of God. Yet those who believe, He will keep in the hour of trial. As is found in Revelation 3:10, "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth."

*As I reflect on this day, I pray and ask the Lord that His promises may shield me and my students in that moment. I see the need to help my students learn about God's provision for this occasion, and by faith thrust in God for His deliverance.*

### **Bonded with God the Father and Jesus the Son**

The education of young people, whether at home or at school, should encourage students in developing their bond with God the Father and Jesus the Son (cf. Philippians 1:13). Part of the mission of those of us who work with the young is to minister to them that their name may be written in the Lamb's book of life (Daniel 12:1).

As I share these ideas of the challenges of teaching and parenting youth in the age of knowledge, technology, information, accountability, relativity, of globalization in economy and rapid changes, I'm reminded that Daniel predicted these would come to pass in the end time (Daniel 12): "Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (vs. 4); "Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked" (vs.9); "None of the wicked will understand, *but those who are wise will understand* (vs.10). *Those who are wise will shine as the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever* (Daniel 12:3, Emphasis added).

As I reflect on these words, I want to encourage each one to continue in the line of the "wise" who minister to all our youth and loved ones to watch and be ready, for the time of the end is near.

Again, the challenges before are:

1. Focus our lifestyle on the will of God the Father and Jesus the Son in all accounts.
2. Develop hope and passion as a citizen in the kingdom of God.
3. Prepare students to stand before God upon His return.
4. Teach students about the day of the Lord, the "Judgment Day".
5. Encourage all students to develop a "bond with God the Father and Jesus, the Son" (Philippians 1:13), so that their names may be written in the Book of life in heaven today.

The prophet Joel reminds me of my sacred mission as a Christian parent and teacher: "Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation" (Joel 1:3). My prayer is that the Lord may empower us to be a blessing for all, that we can meet each loved one around the throne of the Ancient of Days, and Christ His Son.

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# Pastoral Ministry In The Third Millennium: Learning The Art Of Strategic Neglect

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

While flying across the Atlantic a few months ago, we encountered a nasty storm. Though we had experienced many storms on airplanes before, this flight was one of the worst. We were both still and quiet, sitting next to each other during that dreary night. Holding hands, we individually talked with God.

These emotions not only are a reality for pastors but have a ripple effect on the pastor's spouse and children. Often, many of the same expectations placed on the pastor are placed on the spouse and children. For instance, the spouses (usually wives) are asked to take on pastoral responsibilities, and the children are expected to be models of perfection by demonstrating spiritual maturity beyond their years.

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In those moments, when the plane was dipping and shaking and our futures seemed uncertain, our thoughts were not about our work responsibilities. Later, in calmer skies, we confessed to each other what truly was weighing on our minds: our relationship with God, our relationship with each other, and the salvation of our children.

Of course, pastoral ministry has both joys and challenges. While the highs of ministry can be great—leading people to Jesus, bringing hope to people without hope—the lows of ministry can be very low, often causing one to be stretched to the limit of time and resources and falling short in measurable results with both the church and one's family.

## Lessons from a rough ride

Invariably, our lives in ministry can, at times, feel like a nasty storm. The intensity of the job itself added to the high rates of unrealistic expectations from church memberships or even leadership does not always make for a smooth ride. Rather, it sets up pastors to burn out quickly and, often, to live with a great burden of guilt, frustration, and disillusionment.

In the mid-1980s, Paul Tsongas, a United States senator from Massachusetts, found out he had cancer. At first he decided to move ahead with his reelection campaign. He had second thoughts when a friend, Arnold Zack, wrote him a note saying: "No one on his deathbed ever said, 'I wish I had spent more time on my business.'" Tsongas gave up his campaign to spend time with his family during this difficult period.<sup>1</sup>

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We are not suggesting that pastors give up ministry. Rather, we suggest that they take a new look at putting first things first by better

managing their competing commitments and finding homeostasis in their spiritual, personal, and professional lives. “Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first.”<sup>2</sup>

### Strategic neglect

In an interview in *Leadership Journal*, Bill Hybels of the Willow Creek Community Church talked on the keys to simpler and more effective leadership. He mentioned the need for pastors and ministry leaders to come to grips with the notion of “strategic neglect.”<sup>3</sup> This idea speaks to the need for healthy boundaries in ministry. Ostensibly, each pastor needs to focus, simplify, and prioritize.

And with this commitment, one must ask, personally, the questions, who do I want to become over time? What kind of husband or wife? What kind of father or mother? What kind of friend, pastor, or leader? And then ask the follow-up question, what needs to be put into my schedule so that I become this kind of person? Essentially, pastors must decide in a strategic way what things will be left out of their schedules in order to be successful spiritually, personally—in their family life—and professionally.

In a recent study on pastoral family stress in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, a significant percentage of pastors reported difficulty with personal prayer, trouble maintaining personal connection with God, and problems making time for personal devotions. What we know, as people in ministry ourselves, is that without prayer and Bible study, it is impossible to sustain the kind of viable relationship with God necessary for any kind of effective ministry. Without this daily connection, we lose sight of being called, rendering what we do for the church as just a regular job.

So what must the pastor strategically neglect in order to develop stronger spiritual disciplines? Setting specific times to respond to emails? Spending less time with unnecessary

social media? Watching less TV? Getting to bed earlier in order to wake up earlier? You are the only one who can determine what you must strategically neglect so that you can give the necessary time to prayer and Bible study that will enable you to be an effective spiritual leader.

### In the Word

Ezra 7:10 declares, “Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”<sup>4</sup> Note the commitment Ezra made to studying Scripture, living Scripture, and teaching Scripture. Studying God’s Word is a prerequisite for knowing God. Many scholars study and teach Scripture, but it has not made a difference in their lives. Not so with Ezra. He put his heart into it. He studied Scripture, he observed Scripture, and then he taught Scripture.

Without a doubt, strategic neglect was operative in the life of this faithful scribe, or he would have been unable to singularly study, live, and teach Scripture. As pastors, we must learn and operationalize in our lives the model set by Ezra to be effective as leaders of the flock. The time we spend in personal devotion and studying God’s Word cannot just be for sermon preparation, but it must be where we nurture and feed our spiritual lives to be essentially connected to the vine.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus counsels His disciples with the words, “‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” A few verses later, in Acts 1:14, we read, “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.”

The Holy Spirit will inhabit us when we spend time in prayer, asking for clarity of mind and purpose to effectively represent Jesus to the world. The power of the Spirit will come down with the force of Pentecost when we make the time to commune with God through prayer. Without this focus and priority, our lives will become too cluttered to make time

to pray. Ellen G. White counsels, “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work.”<sup>5</sup> As pastors, we must strategically include time for prayer and Bible study, for as we neglect those activities, they become barriers to our spending time with Jesus.

In the North American pastoral study mentioned earlier, many pastors complained about not having enough hours in the week to handle all their responsibilities and still have enough leisure time together as a family. Thus, pastors must strategically neglect many good things in ministry that are not central to their main mission so that they can make the time to be with and nurture their families.

If we both accepted all the invitations we receive each year to speak or write, we would fail in the main objectives of our ministry responsibilities. While often tempted to work through our vacation, we must purposefully delay or decline certain tasks and functions to give us the needed break to be spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy enough to continue to work effectively.

### **Teamwork**

Last August, we celebrated 30 years of marriage. To mark the occasion and create memories to keep our marriage viable, we spent five days at the beach. We enjoy beach vacations, especially where there is beautiful sand and clear blue water.

Our time at the beach was simply incredible. We relaxed, read books, ate food someone else cooked, swam, snorkeled, and went body boarding and kayaking; but most memorable of all was learning to sail.

As soon as our sailing lesson began, we realized sailing is much more complex than it appears on the surface. While a bit stressful, it was also relaxing, challenging, and rewarding. We would need to work together as a team and be on the same side of the catamaran to experience gliding smoothly across the beautiful Caribbean waters.

God created marriage and family to give human beings a sense of community and to make them feel connected to and have a sense of responsibility for another. While the process has challenging moments, the rewards are great.

The Bible is replete with counsel to help us negotiate our family relationships for maximum joy. The more we read the Word of God individually and as a collective, the more we will be in tune with what God wants for us and our families. The truth is, it is impossible within the domain of human capacity to keep love always sheltered from injury or hurt. However, as we apply God’s Word to our family relationships, we can find the capacity to honor God in those relationships. This can only take place, however, as we make the time to be with each other and grow together through the power of God.

### **Family matters**

We love to spend time together. Having the privilege of working together, we have experienced all kinds of favorite things, activities, and places together. We have favorite restaurants, museums, flowers, meals, and many more. We are simply grateful that God brought us together, and we try to apply Scripture to our relationship interactions for maximum benefit. One of our favorite verses in the Bible to be mindful of as we communicate with each other is James 1:19: “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”

Working as closely as we do is gratifying but also challenging. So, we choose to build in fun times together and find reasons to celebrate often in order to keep making our marriage and family a desirable place to be. After spending a weekend on our feet speaking at a couples’ retreat or training pastors and church leaders, we often find a good Indian restaurant. While we try to be temperate and careful, we simply enjoy food and find it a good reason to celebrate God and life.

Our children no longer live at home. However, every time we get a chance to be together, we

make the time to celebrate being connected to each other by participating in an activity we have enjoyed: whether playing a game, eat-ing at a favorite restaurant, visiting a museum, or going to church. This reminds us that we belong to each other and are grateful to God for His goodness to us. And when away from each other, we stay connected by keeping in touch. To be sure, we can accomplish this only by employing strategic neglect.

Pastoral ministry is difficult; at times it can feel as if you are thousands of feet in the air amid a terrible storm. However, once we admit that difficulty, the fact that it is difficult no longer matters as long as we remember that “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians. 4:13).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Paul Tsongas, *Heading Home* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 160.
- <sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 204.
- <sup>3</sup> “*The Secret of Strategic Neglect: Bill Hybels on the Keys to Simpler and More Effective Leadership.*” *Leadership Journal* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version of the Bible.
- <sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 70.

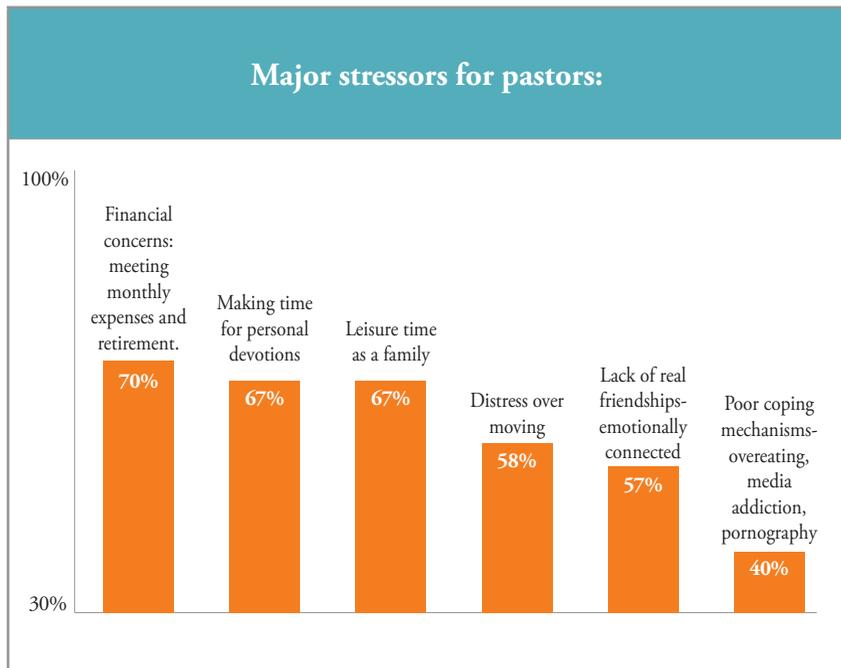
## CHART #1

The 7 Commitments Of A Happy Marriage	
Connection requires commitment. Here are seven key commitments that will take your marriage to the next level: I commit to:	
1	Listening to my spouse without becoming defensive;
2	Sharing my feelings with my spouse without blaming her or him for my feelings;
3	Giving my spouse the benefit of the doubt and not jumping to conclusions;
4	Acknowledging my contribution to our misunderstandings;
5	Apologizing to my spouse when I have done or said something that hurt him or her;
6	Forgiving my spouse even if she or he does not apologize;
7	Doing all I can to give kindness, patience, understanding, and forgiveness to my spouse.

CHART #2

How To Put First Things First
Schedule it!
Personal devotions.
One-to-one time with kids.
Keep schedule!
Honor your commitments to God, family, and church first.
Strategically neglect “little rocks” (those things that get in the way of what’s most important).
Use schedule to stay on track!
Life happens, as such, schedules get derailed (for a moment).
Use schedule to recalibrate and stay focused on priorities.

CHART #3



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# The Leader's Family

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

By the end of our first year of marriage things were not going too well. As a young pastor in the Bronx—one of the boroughs of New York City—I (Willie) was committed to leading the congregation assigned to my care with a spiritual maturity representative of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While fond of my preacher husband, I (Elaine) was a young professional who, after earning a bachelor's degree in business and accounting, then getting married, then spending a year working on Wall Street, had just landed a job at one of the most prestigious women's colleges in the eastern United States. The work was challenging and the environment invigorating. And yes, I was very busy with my own life.

To get started in pastoral ministry I (Willie) had earned a bachelor's degree in theology and a master's degree in religion in the area of pastoral counseling, with concentration in marriage and family counseling. As a pastor's son I had experienced first hand my parents' ministry of helping families stay together. On many occasions I engaged Dad in conversation about the challenges in relationships and the importance of having a strong and healthy family life. Invariably he declared that success in life as a whole had a lot to do with being effective in one's personal family life.

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We were madly in love with each other, really loved Jesus, and assumed that our marriage was as strong as an ox. After all, we grew up in Adventist homes—although very different in configuration—attended Adventist schools, and were now a young pastoral couple leading a relatively small inner-city church to be light and salt in the community in which it existed. What could possibly go wrong with our marriage?

The truth is, as we often share with audiences around the world, all marriages will naturally move toward a state of alienation. That happens because we are human, and “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, NKJV). There are no perfect marriages and families because there are no perfect people. For any marriage to remain viable the partners must be intentional about connecting with each other through the power and grace of God. That foundation is essential to nurture a healthy family.

So regardless of our leadership positions, we found ourselves drifting away from each other—despite our love for each other, love for God, and love for the work we were doing on behalf of God and the church.

A few years later, when our marriage had found deeper satisfaction and stability, we hosted our first marriage retreat. I (Willie) was director of family ministries for the Greater New York Conference. By this time I (Elaine) had received a promotion to the Ivy League university across the

street from the women's college where I had been working. We were now parents of two young children. During the retreat our facilitators, Lennox and Ouida Westney, from Silver Spring, Maryland, engaged us in dialogue.

During our conversation I (Willie) confessed to Elaine that I had prayed to God to help me solve our marital problems. My request was that if He would simply allow Elaine to go to sleep until resurrection morning things would work out much better for me. Please, I requested, allow her no pain or blood.

My (Willie's) appeal to God was that the tension and feelings of resentment taking place in our marriage were not what I had signed up for, and He couldn't possibly want a leader in His church to be going through all the pressure I was experiencing at home. God knew that as a church leader I would not divorce my wife. And, after all, what we were experiencing in marriage—I conjectured in my state of frustration—was the fault of the conference leaders and other more seasoned pastors who had invariably dropped hints about my need to get married. God must have been sending a different message, but the brethren pushed me in this direction. After all, one of the conference administrators had asked me in front of Elaine, just a week after we started dating, "Do you think you can get this young woman to marry you?" And I fell for the trick and answered in my most confident voice, "I think so.' Surely it was a ploy of Satan. But God would help me—so I argued with myself.

Since God promises to give us His peace (John 14:27) and supply all our needs (Phil. 4: 19), I (Willie) knew He would be reasonable enough to provide me a new, more amenable and more compatible spouse who would make my life happy, thus enabling me to serve more effectively in the ministry He had called me to. It is amazing what kind of conversations we think we can have with God when life takes strange turns because of poor choices we make when relating to our spouse. Incredible suspense filled me as I waited for a response from Elaine.

I (Elaine) began to smile. I could see the expression on his face, not sure what to expect

from me. So I shared with him my side of the same story. "You know, it's funny,' I said. "I prayed the exact same prayer."

The tension suddenly left the room. We laughed, looked at each other knowingly, and joined the other couples regrouping to continue listening to the biblical wisdom being presented by our guest presenters.

The truth is, being in a position of leadership is not an inoculation against the rigors embedded in family life. Rather, it is often a barrier to stronger and healthier family relationships. The Bible is filled with examples of exactly that problem.

As people in leadership, we are passionate and driven about our responsibilities. After all, God called us to make a difference, and we have committed ourselves to accomplishing that task in an outstanding way. Such determination is typically so strong that no one needs to encourage or persuade us to do our jobs well. We just do. It is the reason others often notice our potential and invite us to even greater leadership opportunities.

What happens to leaders, though, is that we often lack healthy boundaries to manage our families and work so that both can fully benefit. We cannot easily turn off the passion and drive that we have for our calling when we get home. Although we love our spouse and children, we at the same time believe that the important work we are doing simply cannot wait. And with technology today making us available to anyone at any time, we must be disciplined or pay a heavy price. Such a reality often gets magnified for Christian leaders, because, after all, we are doing God's work, and nothing is more important than that. Or is it?

In our quest to be fully committed to the mission of the church, generations of church leaders have passed on the message to younger leaders that dedicated leadership means being on the job 24/7. Now, that may sound good and may feed our longing to be needed, but it is not compatible with the message in Scripture or the writings of Ellen G. White.

Ellen White declares: "Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for

the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his family comes first.”<sup>1</sup> We cannot escape that responsibility by trying to find the right spouse who can then step into the family gap created by our heavy leadership demands. While every leader needs a committed and gifted spouse to help shoulder the responsibilities of life, Ellen White warns us here that no level of dedication to the work of ministry can ever excuse the demise of our families.

Ellen White also offers: “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.”<sup>2</sup> If that is true, and we believe it is, then we must reexamine our family relationships and do what must happen every time we confront truth we are not practicing—alter our way to give honor and glory to God.

To be sure, nothing will change unless we shift the paradigm that informs the way we live. Stephen R. Covey suggests “most people feel there’s a real gap between what really matters most to them—including family—and the way they live their daily lives.”<sup>3</sup> So the issue is not our extrinsic lack of commitment but rather the absence of any corresponding behavior that demonstrates that our families are really a top priority to us.

The apostle Paul shares his struggles with not following through with what he believes in, when he states: “The good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice ...O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:19-25, NKJV).

As Christian leaders like Paul, our advantage is having full access to the power of God. We must identify what needs to change about the way we do family, then do whatever is necessary. But it is not something we can do by ourselves. We must be willing to avail ourselves of the help of a professional Christian counselor—one of the gifts of the Spirit God has given (1 Cor. 12:1-11) for the edification of the church.

During our certification as facilitators of Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, we learned that to reprioritize our families it is

necessary to employ the basic change model, also known as the see, do, get model. Essentially, we need to see things differently, in order to do things differently, so that we can get a different result. In short, we need to see our families as most important, to do things that convey our regard for and value of them, and then we will get stronger and healthier family relationships.

If the counsel to have well-ordered, well-disciplined families to accomplish more on behalf of the gospel is really true, then we must live our lives as leaders based on the values of the kingdom of God. Paul reinforces the notion in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (NKJV).

Unless we do more to be intentional about connecting with our spouse and children every day, our relationships will naturally drift toward a state of alienation. And if that happens, we will not be able to fulfill the leadership potential God wants us to achieve.

A large body of marriage and family research literature suggests that most relationships experience distress because of a lack of effective communication. If married people, and people in general, learned to communicate better, they would have much more understanding between them and a basis for a stronger and healthier relationship.<sup>4</sup>

One of our favorite passages in the Bible states: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov. 25:11, NKJV). The verse suggests that God wants us to use words—that is, when we speak to our respective families—as if giving a precious gift. There is never a bad time to receive a gift of golden apples in a frame of silver. If the words we employ with our loved ones were as precious as the gift mentioned above, their tone and message would increase the regard and appreciation we have for each other.

Mark and Debra Laaser suggest that we are all born with seven basic desires that must be met for us to feel fulfilled in life. The first desire the Laasers propose is that of being heard and

understood.<sup>5</sup> The Bible affirms this concept by declaring in James 1:19: “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger” (NASB). The truth is that we will be able to hear and understand another human being, particularly members of our family, only when we apply this verse to heart.

In addition to speaking kindly in our families, becoming good listeners is a wonderful and essential quality for superior family relationships. Most difficulties in the family will worsen when we fail to listen to each other. And that includes parents listening to their children. As you can see, the Bible text shared above states that “everyone must be quick to hear.” Everyone includes parents, husbands, wives, and whoever else is a part of a household. Failure to listen leads to lack of understanding and alienation. Listening to our spouse, and especially our children and other family members, will convey attention, respect, regard, and deep love to them. Scripture observes, “love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8, NKJV).

To be able to live happy lives (a prerequisite to being most productive), it is crucial to be proactive-which means living within our circle of control. Rather than being reactive-in which we simply respond in conversation based on our emotions or by the first thing that naturally comes out of our mouths-we pause (pray), think, and carefully choose a reply that takes into consideration the future viability of our family relationships. On this note Ellen White

declares: “If impatient words are spoken to you, never reply in the same spirit”.<sup>6</sup>

Leadership has its privileges and challenges. One of the most significant trials-yet simultaneously an immense honor-is to have a family. We know there are no perfect families, because there are no perfect people. Still, it is our responsibility to understand the place our families must have in the hierarchy of our priorities and be faithful to that privilege even more so than to our passion for the leadership role that God has called us to.

Be of good courage and make the paradigm shift to see your family members differently, so that your behavior toward them will be transformed and you will get a superior response that will expand your leadership capacity.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 204
- <sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952) p. 32.
- <sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: Golden Books, 1997), p. 115.
- <sup>4</sup> Howard J Markman, Scott M. Stanley, and Susan L. Blumberg, *Fighting for your Marriage* (San Francisco: Jossey0Bass, 2001), p. 4.
- <sup>5</sup> Mark and Debra Laaser, *The Seven Secrets of Every Heart* (Grand Rapids: Zonderman Pub. House, 2008, p. 15).
- <sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 486.

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# REPRINTED ARTICLES

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# Long Summer Days And Sabbath-Keeping

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

Q - When our children were little it was quite easy to navigate Sabbath observance. Now that our children are early-teens and filled with energy, it is difficult to keep them indoors, especially during the summer months. Do you have any ideas to share with us?

engaged in the work He was doing of creating the world because He was finished. As you already know. God did more than rest (from the Hebrew word shabath which literally means to cease one's work or activity, and is the word for Sabbath in the English language) on the seventh day. As we read above in Genesis 2:3, God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. To be sure, to sanctify a day means to declare it holy and to set it apart for sacred use.

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A - The Sabbath is a wonderful day for slowing down from the daily routine of the week, making more time for communing with God, and connecting with one's family and loved ones. While many Christians believe the Sabbath came from the Jews, this special day was actually instituted by God during creation week, long before the first Jew appeared in history.

The fact that you have concerns about Sabbath observance with your emerging early-teens is because you are obviously convicted that the seventh-day Sabbath is the day on which God says he rested and the one He sanctified or set aside for holy use.

When God ended His work of creation in six days, at the end of the first chapter of Genesis, He then rested. Genesis 2:2,3 states: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

What is most important for you as a parent who wants to pass on her values to her children is to simply do so by modeling the behavior, and talking about what is critical to your family at regular intervals. If obeying God is important to you as a Christian, you would want to pass that on to your children by: 1. Being obedient to God yourself, and 2. Talking about the importance of being obedient to God.

It is important to note that God did not rest on the seventh day because He was tired (Isaiah 40:28). Rather, God simply stopped being

As you probably already know families keep the Sabbath based on their understanding of what Sabbath-keeping means. Be sure to develop a clear understanding of what Sabbath observance means in your family and pass that on to your children. You may want to review what the New

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Testament has to say about the Sabbath keeping habits of Jesus (Matthew 12:8-14; Mark 1:21; 2:27-28; 6:2; Luke 6:5-6; 13:10-17; 23:54-56; John 5:1-18; 7:22-24; 9:1-38) and recognize that the Sabbath is a day in which to do good for others.

We encourage you to make Sabbath observance a happy time in which your family is engaged in activities that draw you closer to each

other and closer Jesus. This can include being involved in service on behalf of others, which is a great summertime and year-round activity. Of course, like other values you have taught your children, until the principles are embraced fully by them they may not always do exactly as you have shared with them. However, in patience, continue to model and communicate your values to your children and God will bless you. We are praying for you.

# CoParenting in a Toxic Ex-Relationship

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

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Q - My husband and I have been divorced for almost five years, and we are still beefin' with each other. Last week my 15-year-old daughter saw something I posted on Facebook about her dad that was pretty hateful. Of course, that was said only after he said some pretty hateful things about me. How do we stop this toxic cycle and coparent in a more positive way?

A - We are really sorry to hear about this toxic cycle between you and your ex-husband. Below are several suggestions that will help you get your relationship on a different track.

## 1. Keep your business off Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets!

Everybody on your “friends list” is not your friend. And even friends, who are trying to be supportive, may lead you down the wrong path. We’re pretty sure that when you or your husband posted your hateful remarks about each other, someone “liked” it. This type of affirmation is actually negative and not what you need to help you get your relationship on a right track. Resist the urge to make your private life public. Facebook is not private!

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## 2. Manage your emotions

One of the biggest challenges in coparenting after a divorce is managing emotions. No matter the reason for the divorce, there’s still pain. No one who gets married expects to get divorced. Divorce separates two people who were intimately joined—emotionally, physically, and spiritually—and you will heal only as you go through an intentional process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Sometimes this requires help from a qualified professional, such as a pastor or counselor.

## 3. Focus on your children

It is important that you put your children first. The people who are most hurt after a divorce are children. So making sure their emotional needs are cared for is essential to their future well-being, including success in school, how sick or healthy they will be, and managing their own future relationships. At this point you and your ex-husband need to learn to put the needs of your children before your own. Don’t ever put them in the middle and make them choose sides.

## 4. Commit to learning how to communicate better

This is sound advice for everyone. “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19, NIV). Everyone communicates daily,

but most of us are not very good at it. Read some good books, or attend a seminar that will help you develop better skills to speak with your ex-husband. It will also help you when talking with your children and with others.

### 5. Be Proactive

The opposite of proactive is reactive, which is a normal response when someone says something we don't like, or says something that hurts. Challenge yourself to pause before responding in such situations. When you pause, you allow yourself to calm down and you give your brain time to respond in a rational way. You will find that not everything needs a response.

### 6. Commit to being collegial and cooperative

While you and your ex-husband can become friends again, friendship is not needed to be civil with each other. Set aside time to meet with him—include new spouses—and develop a plan to communicate better about your co-parenting activities.

### 7. When all else fails, take the high road

Even after you've tried all of these suggestions, your ex-husband may not change his bad behavior. Remember, you can only control yourself. Make choices that will be best for your peace of mind and ensure the well-being of your daughter.

Trust God. He has promised to supply all your needs. We are praying for your success.

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# BOOK SHELF

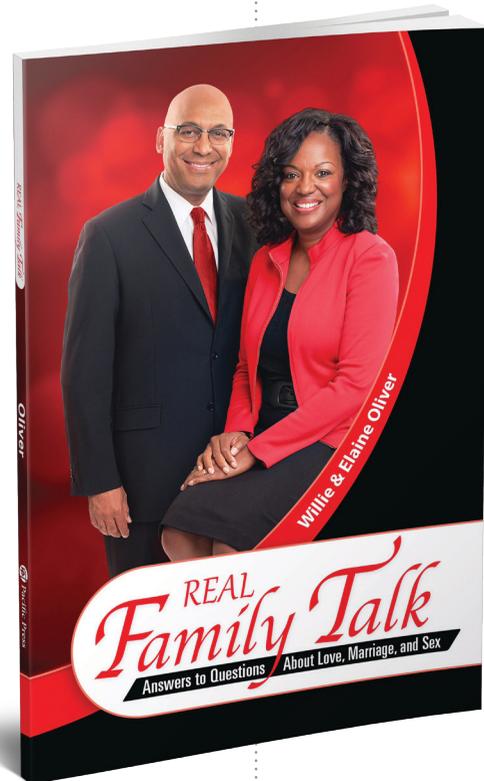
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# Real Family Talk

## Answers to Questions About Love, Marriage and Sex

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER  
Pacific Press® Publishing Association  
Nampa, Idaho, 2015  
127 pages

This book is a compilation of selected columns on relationships written by Willie and Elaine Oliver for the Message magazine in response to questions from real people. The authors provide expert advice, based on biblical principles, for questions about marriage, sex, parenting, being single and other real relationships issues. In their counsel, the authors remind us of the reality that we all face challenges in our relationships and in our homes. Their discerning answers direct us to seek God's guidance, reminding us that God's plan is for us to have healthy homes and relationships where each person seeks the harmony that God desires for us to experience.



# Jesus Who Is He?

JOHN AND MILLIE YOUNGBERG

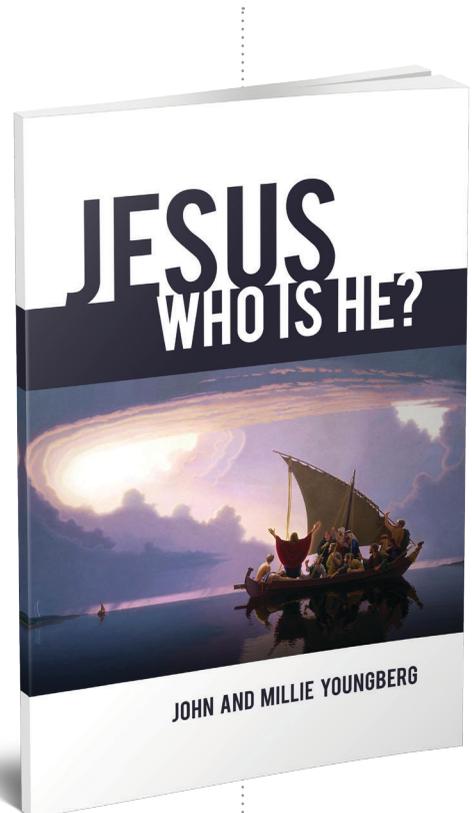
© WIN! Wellness

Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2015

130 pages

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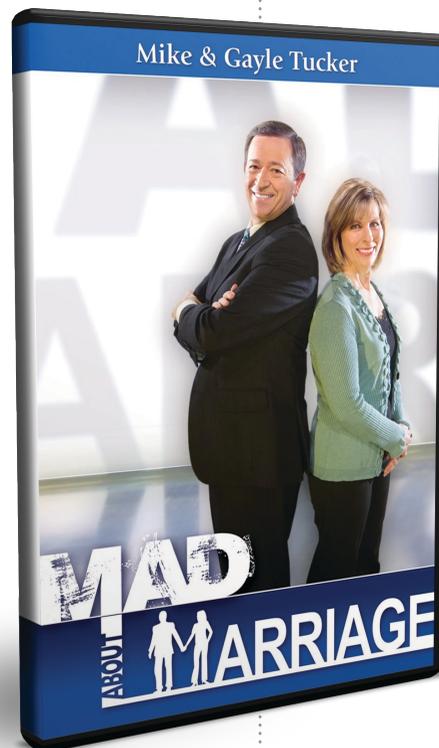
This book consists of 20 short stories from the life of Jesus set in a modern context. It leads the readers to examine for themselves how Jesus related to people around him. His mission was to bring hope and meaning to everyone he interacted with by meeting their physical and spiritual needs. Jesus is central to our whole lives. The daily readings include thought-provoking questions to bring the reader to know Jesus as his or her personal savior. Black and white pictures of the Adventist artist, Nathan Greene, gracefully illustrate this inspiring book.



# Mad About Marriage Flipping the Switch Small Group Curriculum

MIKE AND GAYLE TUCKER  
Pacific Press Publishing Association  
Nampa, Idaho, 2010  
Video Series – 6 DVDs

This resource consists of two DVDs of 6 video sessions with participant guidebooks and Mantras for Marriage. It is designed for small groups, encouraging couples to “flip the switch” from being mad to being madly in love. For marriages to succeed, couples must identify negative issues that they are struggling with and replace them with positive factors that will lead them to enjoy a great marriage. Some of these issues are easily identified, like abuse, forgiveness and infidelity. However, more destructive issues may be present in marriages without couples recognizing their existence. This is a helpful tool for couples seeking to strengthen their marriage.



# Help! I'm a Parent: Christian Parenting in the Real World

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

*AdventSource*

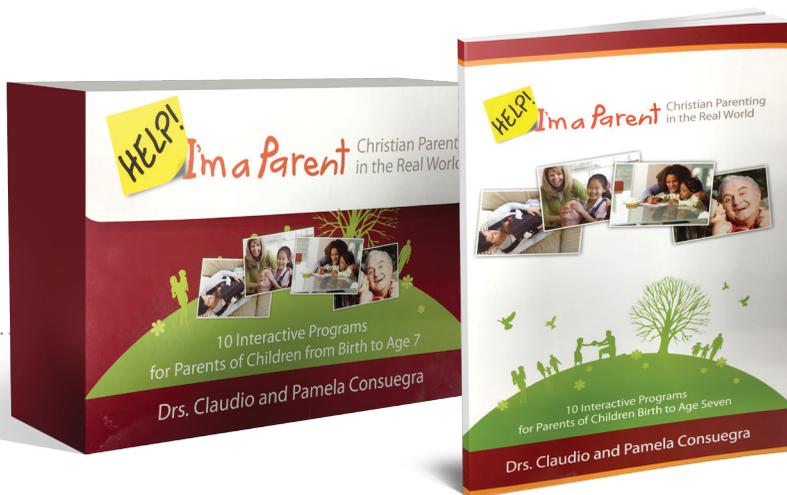
Lincoln, Nebraska, 2013

102 pages, 1 DVD

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This is a resource for parents, grand parents and caregivers of children from birth through age 7. It consists of a manual with 10 interactive chapters, two DVD sets, and instructions for sharing this seminar with your church or community. The authors instruct parents to

build and disciple young children, and address challenges experienced in their God-given roles. In a world where raising children is becoming more complex, this resource is a helpful tool that provides practical applications based on God's word.



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All materials were reviewed by:

**Rosemay Cangy**, is Editorial Assistant for the Department of Family Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

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# APPENDIX A

# FAMILY MINISTRIES

# IMPLEMENTATION

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Please use these documents as part of your work in Family Ministries. The contents are the result of working with families in our church around the world. You can find each print version of these files in the disc that comes with this book.

**Note:**

Some of the recommendations listed in these forms will need to be adapted and modified to the specific needs and laws of the territories in which this resource is to be used.

# A Family Ministries Policy and Purpose Statement

The congregation and staff of the

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Church are committed to providing a safe environment to help children learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. It is the purpose of this congregation to prevent any form of child abuse physical, emotional or sexual and to protect children and those who work with them.

Churches with programs for children are not insulated from those who abuse: therefore, this congregation believes that it is vitally important to take decisive steps to ensure that the church and its programs are safe, providing a joyful experience for children and youth. The following policies have been established and reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children when they are attending any church sponsored activity.

- Volunteers who work with children and youth are required to be active members of this congregation for a minimum of six months, and must be approved by appropriate church personnel before they may begin working directly with children, unless there has been previous documented clearance.

- All NAD employees and NAD volunteers who regularly work with children must complete an application form (see NAD’s Children’s Ministries website: <http://childmin.com/files/docs/VolMinScreeningForm.pdf>). References must be obtained from potential volunteers. Appropriate personnel or staff must check those references. Other divisions are encouraged to follow this procedure.
- All workers with children should observe the “two person” rule, which means that workers must avoid one-on-one situations with children whenever possible.
- Adult survivors of childhood physical or sexual abuse need the love and acceptance of the church family. Individuals with such a history must discuss their desire to work with children and youth with one of the staff in a confidential interview prior to receiving approval to work in these areas.
- Individuals who have committed physical or sexual abuse, whether or not convicted, may not work in church –sponsored activities or programs for children or youth.
- Opportunities for training in prevention and recognition of child abuse will be provided by the church. Workers will be expected to participate in such training.

- Workers should immediately report to the pastor or administration any behaviors or other incidents that seem abusive or inappropriate. Upon notification, appropriate actions will be taken and reports made in compliance with the operating procedure of these policies.
- Guidelines for volunteers who work with your and children will be provided to each volunteer.
- Children shall not be allowed to roam around the church without adult supervision. Parents are responsible for supervising their children before and after Sabbath School.
- No child should be released to use the restroom unless accompanied by a parent or older sibling.
- A responsible adult shall be designated to circulate in and around the church, including parking areas to provide security. This is critical when only one adult is present at some activities for minors, such as a Sabbath School division.
- Any discipline shall occur within the visual contact of another adult. All forms of corporal punishment are strictly prohibited.
- All meetings for children or youth must have the approval of the pastor and/or church board, especially overnight activities. Minors must have signed parental permission for each trip, including emergency medical treatment release.
- If there is a known sex offender attending a church, a deacon or other responsible adult shall be assigned to monitor the person while on the premises or at off-site church activity. The offender shall be informed of the procedure. If a sex offender transfers to or attends another church, the leadership of that church shall be notified.

# The Family Ministries Leader

The family ministries leader designs a ministry to families that will meet the specific needs of the congregation and community. This section provides planning support for family ministries leaders. Planning is critical for ministering to the individuals and families in the congregation. Family ministries is also an excellent way to reach out to families in the community. The family ministries leader is a member of the local church board and integrates family ministries activities to the whole church program. Listed below are responsibilities and activities.

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1. Develop and chair a small family ministries committee that reflects the distinctiveness of the congregation. It may include a single parent, young married persons, mid-life families, retired, widowed or divorced persons. People who serve on this committee should be carefully chosen as visionary people reflecting the grace of God.
2. Be a family advocate. Family ministries is not merely program-oriented, but must look at the whole church program with sensitivity to its impact on families. In some situations the family ministries leader may need to advocate for family time. In other words, there may be so many programs going on in a congregation that people have little time to live their own lives as families.
3. Survey family needs and interests in the congregation. The needs assessment survey and family profile sheet may be used to help determine the needs of the congregation.
4. Plan programs and activities for the year that may include video presentations, retreats or special speakers who present workshops and seminars. Plans should also include simple activities that may be suggested to families through the church bulletin or newsletter.
5. Work with the pastor and church board to be sure plans are included in the local church budget.
6. Make use of the resources available from the conference family ministries department. These can save time, energy and serve to keep costs down for the local congregation. When planning for special presentations, the conference family ministries director is able to assist in finding interesting and qualified presenters.
7. Communicate with the congregation. Family ministries should not be perceived simply as an annual event. Keep the importance of good family skills alive by use of posters, the church newsletter and/or bulletin throughout the year.
8. Share your plans with the conference family ministries director.

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Reprinted from Family Ministries Handbook: The complete how-to guide for local church leaders. (2003).  
Lincoln, NE: AdventSource. Used with permission

# What is a Family?

One of the tasks of a family ministries leader is to define the families to whom they minister within their congregations. A ministry only to married couples with children, for example, will benefit only a small percentage of the people in the church. Families of all sorts may need guidance as they move toward healthy relationships. The work of coping with the daily tasks of sharing a household and managing conflict is never easy when people share space and resources or come from homes with differing values. Here are some of the ways families today are configured.

- Families are nuclear – with Mom, Dad and children who were born to this Mom and Dad.
- Families are stepfamilies – sometimes called blended. Stepfamilies are formed when parents divorce or are widowed and remarry. Some become stepfamilies when an unmarried parent marries someone not the father/mother of his/her child.
- Families are single – sometimes just me and the cat – living alone. They may be divorced, widowed or never married, but the household is a separate entity. Some singles may live with other singles in one household.
- Families are single parent – This may occur when a parent is divorced or widowed and has not remarried, or is a parent who has never married.
- Families are empty nest families – Mom and Dad when the kids leave home.
- Families are re-attached – When adult children come back to live with Mom and Dad – usually a temporary arrangement. A family is re-attached when an older parent lives with the family of a son or daughter or grandchild.
- Families are a part of the family of God. Many consider members in their congregation as family and may feel closer ties to them than those related by birth or marriage.

Beyond the usual family demographics one can also stimulate people to think about their important relationships, including those in the church family, by posing questions like these:

- If an earthquake destroyed your town, who would you be most desperate to locate to be sure they were okay?
  - If you were moving a thousand miles away, who would move with you?
- Who would be the ones you'd stay in touch with, however difficult it might be?
- If you developed a long-term illness, who could you count on to take care of you?
  - Who will be your family from now until you or they die?
  - From whom could you borrow money and not feel like you had to pay it back right away?

# Committee and Planning Guidelines

Family ministries leaders who are either new to the position or have never served as a leader wonder where to begin! This section is to help a leader get started. It is often helpful to select a small committee with whom one can work well—people well oriented in the grace of Christ and who don't have the proverbial ax to grind. A family ministries committee, more than any other, should seek to model family. What follows are some ways to accomplish that. While these ideas are not the only way to work, they can help a group work together more smoothly. (They may be helpful to other committees as well).

- Select a small number of persons with similar concerns for families. They should represent the variety of families found in the congregation. This committee might have a single parent, married couple, divorced, retired or widowed persons, and reflect the gender and ethnic profile of the church.
- The committee should not be too large—five to seven persons are ideal. Individuals may represent more than one family category.
- Especially for the first meeting, gather in an informal setting—perhaps at someone's home or a comfortable room at the church. Begin with prayer for God's blessing.
- Provide light refreshments that include water or hot or cold drinks, something light too much on like fresh fruit, cookies, or nuts. Make it attractive, but not fussy or involving great effort.
- For the first meeting, spend time telling each other your story. This is not a therapy session so let people know that they should tell only what is comfortable. A few guidelines will help: confidentiality is to be respected and seen as a gift to one another. It might be good for the leader to begin—starting with sentences like, “I was born in..., raised in a (Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Catholic or whatever) home.” Include other things like where you went to school, children's names or other pertinent information. Include how you became a Christian or a Seventh-day Adventist or a pleasant or funny story from childhood. This may seem like a waste of time. But you may be surprised to hear the story of someone you thought you knew for a long time. The telling of our stories is how we connect and bond with each other. It will make your work together go more smoothly. It will also make it easier for committee members to be sensitive to the needs of one another.
- For all subsequent meetings, spend a portion of time—perhaps 10 or 20 minutes in re-connecting with your committee members. One might be rejoicing over an important event. Another may need support with a special need. Here are some questions you could ask to start your meetings:
  - Who are the people you consider to be your close family?
  - How do you live your faith together as a family?
  - What do you think the church could do to help your family?

- What do you like best about your family?

Then move to the agenda. Remember that you are modeling family.

- Review results of the Interest Survey.
- Talk about goals. What do you wish to accomplish? Will it meet a need? Who are you trying to reach? How can you accomplish your goals?

- Pray for God's blessing, plan wisely so that people do not burn out and ministry is soon underway.

An important resource for Family Ministries leader is the Family Ministries Planbook. A new edition of this resource book is published every year and includes programs, sermon outlines, seminars and much more that can be used as part of your yearly program.

# A Good Presentation Will Do Four Things

1. **Inform** – People should learn something they did not know prior to attending your presentation.
2. **Entertain** – People deserve not to be bored!!!
3. **Touch the Emotions** – Information that only informs the head never makes a change in attitude or behavior.
4. **Move to Action** – If participants leave your presentation without a desire to DO something different –you have wasted your time and theirs!

## Handouts

- Distribute only when they are relevant to the presentation.
- Sometimes it's best not to distribute handouts until the end of the meeting: the audience shouldn't be rustling papers while you are speaking.
- Your audience should not read ahead and tune you out.
- Don't just copy someone else's presentation for your handouts.

## Introduction

- Find out who will introduce you.
- Write your own introduction.
- Contact the person at least two days before and give them the introduction.
- Pronounce any unusual words– check accuracy of all information.
- Don't make assertions that are not true.

# The Ten Commandments of Presentations

1. **Know Thyself** – Body language and tone of voice make up 93% of your credibility. Would you be interested in you?
2. **Be prepared** – Know your presentation, your equipment and be ready for mishaps. Projectors always blow bulbs in the midst of important presentations so keep a spare, and know how to change it.
3. **Examine Your Speech** – Use direct expressions, and don't seek to impress—you're there to communicate.
4. **Arrive Early** – Your guests might be waiting. Be there at least a half hour before the presentation to make certain that everything is set up the way you want it to be.
5. **Tell Them What to Expect** – Tell the meeting attendees specifically what they will learn in the course of the meeting and how they will be able to apply their new knowledge. Clear goals keep attendees focused on their own responsibilities as active participants.
6. **Less Is More** – Your audience can only take so much, so limit your main points. Seven main points is roughly the maximum your audience can take in and fully contain.
7. **Keep Eye Contact** – Use note cards instead of a completely scripted speech, so you can look up and keep eye contact with your audience. Avoid the urge to READ a presentation. Your audience response will be thanks enough for sticking your neck out.
8. **Be Dramatic** – Use bold words and unusual statistics. Your presentation should be filled with simple, hard-hitting statements to keep your audience intrigued. Laughter never hurts either!
9. **Motivate** – End your presentation with a call to action Tell your audience exactly what they can do in response to your presentation.
10. **Take A Deep Breath, and Relax!** – Don't huddle over the lectern. If you are standing behind one, stand up tall. Move around. Use gestures for emphasis. Remember how you say something is as important as what you have to say.

# Family Life Profile Survey

Name ..... Date of Birth .....

Age group:  18-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61-70  71+

Gender:  M  F (c)

Address .....

Telephone (Home) ..... (Work) .....

Baptized SDA  Yes  No

If Yes, local church membership .....

If No, what is your religious background/present affiliation? .....

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Marital status:

Single, never married

Single, divorced

Single, widowed

Married—Spouse’s name ..... Date of Birth .....

Spouse is SDA—Local church membership

Spouse is not SDA—Present religious affiliation

Children whose primary residence is with you:

Name ..... Birthdate .....

Grade in school ..... School attending .....

Baptized SDA? ..... Local church membership .....

Name ..... Birthdate .....

Grade in school ..... School attending .....

Baptized SDA? ..... Local church membership .....

Children whose primary residence is elsewhere:

Name ..... Birthdate .....  
 Baptized SDA? ..... Local church membership .....

Name ..... Birthdate .....  
 Baptized SDA? ..... Local church membership .....

Other family members living with you:

Name ..... Birthdate .....  
 Baptized SDA? ..... Local church membership .....  
 Family Relationship .....

Name ..... Birthdate .....  
 Baptized SDA? ..... Local church membership .....  
 Family Relationship .....

What is the most significant thing the Family Ministries Committee could do this year to address the interests/needs of your family?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

I am interested in Family Ministries and am willing to help by

- Telephoning as needed
- Participating in planning sessions
- Providing transportation
- Preparation for events
- Help with meals/refreshments
- Child care
- Advertising
- Other

Presenting lectures/classes/seminars/workshops or other presentations Your interest area(s)

.....  
 .....

# Family Life Profile

Church ..... Date .....

## Family Category

### Active Members

- With Children Under 18
- No Children Under 18

### Inactive Members

- With Children Under 18
- No Children Under 18

### Married—Spouse is a Member

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

### Married—Spouse is a Non-member

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

### Single—Never Married

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

### Single—Divorced

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

# Family Ministries Interest Survey

Your age group:  18-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61-70  71+

Gender:  M  F

From the topics below, please select the five that are of most interest to you.

Place a check in front of each one you select:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for marriage   | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship and devotional life  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family finance             | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline in the home     | <input type="checkbox"/> Single adult living          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting teenagers        | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving self-worth         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for childbirth | <input type="checkbox"/> Resolving anger and conflict |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce recovery           | <input type="checkbox"/> Television and media         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single parenting           | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for retirement   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical dependency issues   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enriching your marriage    | <input type="checkbox"/> Blended families             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grief recovery             | <input type="checkbox"/> Death and dying              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding temperaments | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with widowhood        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list): ..... |   |

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Suggested guest speakers/presenters: .....

Name .....

Address ..... Telephone .....

Area(s) of specialty .....

What time of the day and what day of the week is best for you to attend a 1-1/2 - 2 hour program on one of the above topics? (Check the appropriate periods.)

	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Morning	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Evening	<input type="checkbox"/>						

# Community Family Life Education Survey

1. What do you believe is the number one problem facing families in this community right now?

.....

2. Would you consider attending any of these Family Life Seminars if they were offered in this area? (Select as many as you wish.)

- How to Handle Conflict
- Communication in Marriage
- Marriage Enrichment or Encounter
- Understanding Children
- Self-Esteem
- Parenting Skills
- Dealing with Teenagers
- Childbirth Preparation Class
- Other (Please specify) .....
- Divorce Recovery
- Stress Management
- Overcoming Loneliness Weekend
- Family Finances
- Grief Recovery
- Time Management and Life Priorities
- Planning Retirement

3. What time of the day and what day of the week is best for you to attend a 1-1/2 - 2 hour program on one of the above topics? (Check the appropriate periods.)

	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Morning	<input type="radio"/>						
Afternoon	<input type="radio"/>						
Evening	<input type="radio"/>						

4. It will help strengthen this survey if we could obtain the following information about you:

Sex:  M  F

Age: (Please circle the appropriate group.)

17 or under  19-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61-70  71+

Do you have children under 18 years of age in your home?  Yes  No

Are you:

- Never married
- Separated
- Widowed
- Married
- Divorced
- Remarried after divorce

# Sample Evaluation

1. What inspired you most about this workshop?

.....

2. What did you learn that you didn't know before?

.....

3. Were the concepts in this workshop presented in a clear manner?

.....

4. Which activity/section was of least value to you?

.....

5. How could this workshop be improved?

.....

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being generally dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how would you rate this workshop? Circle one.

- |                           |                          |                         |                         |                         |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1   | <input type="radio"/> 2  | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Generally<br>Dissatisfied | Somewhat<br>Dissatisfied | Somewhat<br>Satisfied   | Generally<br>Satisfied  | Very<br>Satisfied       |

7. Who made this evaluation?

Your age group:  18-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61-70  71+

Gender:  M  F

Marital Status:

- Never married       Married  
 Separated             Divorced  
 Widowed

How long have you been married, divorced, separated or widowed?

.....years      .....months

Thank you for your honest comments, they will help us in planning future workshops!

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# APPENDIX B

# VOTED STATEMENTS

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# An Affirmation of Marriage

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing

child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

# Statement on Home and Family

The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility.

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The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity.

Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, stated: "The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov.4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." -The Ministry of Healing, p. 349.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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*Healthy Families for Eternity* is for pastors and ministry leaders in their work with families in and out of the church. We hope the resources found in this volume will help develop healthier families, which invariably result in healthier churches that can reach the world with power and joy to help hasten the coming of Jesus Christ.

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