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# **COVID-19 SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR FAMILIES**

+15 INSIGHTFUL MESSAGES TO HELP YOUR FAMILY  
RELATIONSHIPS DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

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**Adventist<sup>®</sup>**  
Family Ministries

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2020  
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

# MAKING DISCIPLES

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



# Keeping Our Homes Abuse-Free

KATIA G. REINERT

## Introduction

Peter grew up in an Adventist home. His dad was first elder and highly respected at church. At home things were different. His father's charming personality at church turned into a raging demeanor at home when things did not exactly please him. He physically abused Peter's mom periodically, as well as Peter and his brother. He demanded respect and submission as the leader of the home, and he used the Bible to support his views. No one in the family was allowed to speak of the father's behavior outside of the home, or else. Peter carried wounds of physical and verbal abuse through childhood and into adulthood.

John had something to say, but he had to build up the courage to tell Abigail, his wife. He finally told her that he's been thinking about going back to school for further his education and hopefully get a better job with more income. "Why would you even consider that?" Abigail yelled. "You failed the last courses you took, so you're obviously not going to make it this time. You are stupid. You'll never last through the program, and we're not wasting our money on that. As it is, I am the one working and managing the bills." No punches were thrown in this conversation, but

deep wounds of verbal/emotional abuse were created.

Joan grew up in a lovely Adventist home, but fell in love with the wrong guy. He seemed very charming and in love with her. He cared so much, it seemed. He wanted to know where she was all the time and with whom. Slowly their relationship became the focus of her life. She had no more time for friends. He did not want her to work outside the home. She married him, but came to learn that he had many unusual requests for their sexual encounters. She was not comfortable but had to comply or else he would get enraged and force himself on her. She felt violated. Joan was deeply wounded by her husband's sexual abuse.

Andrea's father is actively involved in Adventist mission work around the world. He has a passion to reach the world. At home his disciplinary methods were very severe. Since early in her childhood, Andrea remembers episodes of heavy spanking which would sometimes lead to bleeding. Her emotional trauma resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks, and depression. She is still trying to deal with her emotional wounds and seeking to heal the mental health conditions she is experiencing. She dreams to serve God, but has found her mental health is an obstacle that she must overcome. She is seeking emotional and spiritual healing.

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We could go on retelling many stories of child abuse, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse which unfortunately happen in Adventist families much more than we would like to admit. Why does it happen? Aren't we supposed to be Godly people, preaching the gospel to the world and living an exemplary life? How can we keep our homes abuse-free?

## What is Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and abuse includes any attempt by one person in an intimate relationship or marriage to dominate and control the other, whether they are the spouse, the child, or the parent. Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over another. A perpetrator of an abuser uses fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear the other down and keep them under their thumb.

Domestic violence and abuse do not discriminate. Abuse occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, economic levels, and religious affiliations. And while women are more often victimized, men also experience abuse—especially verbal and emotional. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether from a man, woman, teenager, or an older adult. Everyone deserves to feel valued, respected, and safe.

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal assaults to violence. And while physical injury may pose the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy one's self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make the victim feel helpless and alone. No one should have to endure this kind of pain—and the first step to breaking free is learning how to recognize when a relationship is abusive.

## Prevalence of Abuse

Although violence and abuse impacts everyone, women, children, and elderly people

seem to bear the brunt of nonfatal physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.<sup>1</sup> Here are some numbers:

- 1 in 4 adults report having been physically abused as children.
- 1 in 5 women reports having been sexually abused as a child.
- 1 in 3 women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her lifetime.<sup>2</sup>
- 1 in 17 older adults reported abuse in the past month.
- Women report higher rates of lifetime exposure to rape, physical violence, and stalking than do men.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 12 men have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup>
- In one study among Adventists, 67% of adult participants stated they had at least one of the following types of child abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, witnessing abuse among parents).<sup>5</sup>

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## Principles to follow for an Abuse-Free home

We know based on studies that the cycle of abuse seems to go on into adulthood, making child abuse survivors sometimes more likely to engage in abusive relationships as adults. Unhealthy boundaries are often a problem. Likewise, perpetrators of abuse have wounds of their own, often the result of childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, or dysfunction in the family. For instance, Peter—the child mentioned earlier who was abused by his father—could become a perpetrator of abuse if he does not find a way to deal with the wounds that he carries.

So how can we who live in a sinful, imperfect world while growing up in imperfect families

prevent domestic violence and live in an abuse-free home?

Here are 7 principles to consider:

**1. Evaluate potential wounds from childhood.** Before getting married, it is critical that each individual takes time evaluating their own background and any potential dysfunction or abuse which they may have experienced. Ideally they should talk with a counselor about these experiences and evaluate how they have impacted their mental and emotional life and well-being, as well as their behavior towards others in intimate relationships. Do they have anger issues as a result of what they endured? Do they use healthy boundaries towards themselves and others? These and other questions are important to evaluate. The first step is to identify the source of any deep wounds.

**2. Seek Emotional and Spiritual Healing for identified wounds of abuse.** Once the wounds and the sources of these wounds are identified, it is important that each one seek psychological and spiritual counseling. Healing from these past wounds is critical if the new home being formed is to be abuse-free. Understanding what forgiveness really means, and finding emotional healing is a must for anyone who has been wounded by abuse.

**3. Know the signs of abuse.** Too many people have difficulty identifying when physical, emotional, or sexual abuse has taken place. When people grow up in an abusive home sometimes that is the only “normal” they know. This helps explain why many survivors of abuse end up with an abusive partner. Sometimes violence can begin early in a relationship and other times it may take years to appear. The critical issue is knowing how to identify the warning signs. Below are some examples of warning signs:<sup>6</sup>

Does your partner, parent or child:

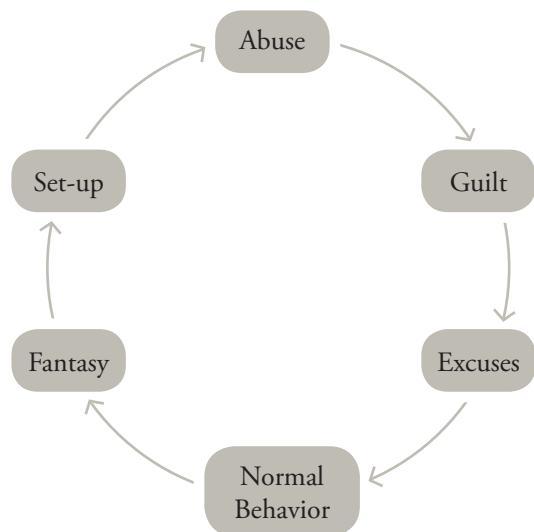
- have a bad and unpredictable temper
- hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you
- threaten to commit suicide if you leave
- is jealous of your friends/family or time spent away from him/her

- embarrass or shame you
- control all financial decisions even though you are an adult
- make you feel guilty for all the problems in the relationship
- prevent you from working
- Intentionally damage your property
- threaten violence against you, your pets or someone you love to gain compliance
- pressure you to have sex when you don't want to
- intimidate you physically, especially with weapons
- act excessively jealous and possessive
- control where you go or what you do
- keep you from seeing your friends or family
- limit your access to money, the phone, or the car
- constantly check up on you

Do you:

- feel afraid of your partner, parent or child much of the time?
- avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner, parent, or child?
- feel that you cannot do anything right for your partner, parent, or child?
- believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- wonder if you're the one who is crazy?
- feel emotionally numb or helpless?

Identify the cycle of abuse:<sup>7</sup>



**Abuse** – Your abusive partner, parent, or child lashes out with aggressive, belittling, or violent behavior. This treatment is a power-play designed to show you “who is in control.”

**Guilt** – Your partner, parent, or child feels guilt after abusing you, but not because of their actions. They’re more worried about the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for their abusive behavior.

**Excuses** – Your abuser rationalizes what they have done. The person may come up with a string of excuses or blame you for provoking them—anything to avoid taking responsibility.

**“Normal” behavior** – Your abuser does everything in their power to regain control and ensure that you’ll stay in the relationship. A perpetrator may act as if nothing has happened, or they might “turn on the charm.” This peaceful honeymoon phase may give you hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

**Fantasy and planning** – Your abuser begins to fantasize about repeating the abuse. They spend a lot of time thinking about what you’ve done wrong and how they’ll make you pay for it. Then they form a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality.

**Set-up** – Your abuser sets you up and puts their plan in motion, creating a situation where they can justify abusing you. Your abuser’s apologies and loving gestures in between the episodes of abuse can make it difficult to leave. They may cause you to believe that you are the only person who can help them, that they will change their behavior, and that they truly love you. However, the dangers of staying are very real.

**4. Don’t ignore the signs of abuse.** Once you identify the first signs, don’t pretend that everything is okay, or that things will change for the better on its own. Many people tend to think this sign is an anomaly, and they rather believe it will go away. Sometimes they blame themselves for their abusive family member’s behavior (parent, child, or spouse). The tendency is not to confront the

issue. Pray earnestly and talk to someone you trust, maybe a pastor who understands, a friend or a counselor, and seek guidance. If you are a church member or leader who have noticed signs of abuse do not ignore it either. Approach one of the family members with kindness, offer friendship, make yourself available to pray for and with them anytime, or help in any way.

It is often helpful to document what you have experienced and the situations where you see the signs of abuse, so that you can recall the details later. Include the date, time, location, any injuries, and the circumstances of the abusive incident. This information could be very useful as you talk with your partner or a counselor, or even later on if needed for police reports and court cases, both criminal and civil.

## **5. Talk to the partner or family member.**

Pray about it and explore how best to approach the family member about the abuse that you experienced. It could be a parent, a spouse, or a child who is the perpetrator. If the family member is willing to recognize the problem and seek help, explore how best to seek guidance. Sometimes couples’ therapy may be helpful, but often individual counseling is also critical, especially if the other person is not willing to seek help or denies any problems. If the situation has escalated or your fear of retaliation is high, then perform a danger assessment.<sup>8</sup> If you have a high danger score, take precautions for your safety and that of any children. Seek a shelter, the police, or someone you trust.

**6. Explore resources that could help you be a better parent/spouse/child and prevent abusive behaviors in your home.** There are many resources available to help parents learn healthier ways to discipline or guide a child, and also cultivate healthy ways to communicate among family members. Read and seek these resources. The Adventist church has published extensively on this topic and offers many guides for parents, as well as other resources for developing a healthy marriage.

Pray as parents, and as couples, for God's wisdom. Read the inspired counsel given us in books by Ellen G. White.

**7. As a church member or leader, learn effective ways to help and how to get involved in prevention.** Whether you are a church member, leader, or pastor, you can pray for the family in crisis. Though prayer is critical and cannot be underemphasized, we must also ACT. It is critical to reach out with love and compassion using wisdom and kindness as we offer help, but it is equally critical that we educate ourselves to recognize signs of abuse and refer people to professionals who can help.

Here is how to recognize signs of abuse in families:<sup>9</sup>

**People who are being abused may:**

- Seem afraid or anxious to please their partner
- Go along with everything their partner says and does
- Check in often with their partner to report where they are and what they're doing
- Receive frequent, harassing phone calls from their partner
- Talk about their partner's temper, jealousy, or possessiveness

**Warning signs of physical violence.** People who are being physically abused may:

- Have frequent injuries, often using the excuse of "accidents" when questioned
- Frequently missing work, school, or social occasions without explanation
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g. wearing long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors)

**Warning signs of isolation.** People who are being isolated by their abuser may:

- Be restricted from seeing family and friends
- Rarely go out in public without their partner
- Have limited access to money, credit cards, or the car

**The psychological warning signs of abuse.** People who are being abused may:

- Have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident
- Show major personality changes (e.g. an outgoing person becomes withdrawn)
- Be depressed, anxious, or suicidal

As a pastor or church leader, make sure your church is participating in the ENDITNOW<sup>10</sup> Sabbath every year as a way to educate your church and community. There are excellent materials prepared each year, which include sermons, children stories, seminars, etc. Be intentional about raising awareness and referring people to appropriate experts who can help guide the family.

Refer people to appropriate experts who can help guide the family. Make yourself available and identify counselors in the church (if available) or in the community who are experts and can be trusted to help.

In cases of child abuse, witnessing or learning of a dangerous situation for anyone in the family, call the police or social services. In the case of spousal abuse, you may help save a life. In some places females are killed by their partner twice as much as males.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately this has happened among Adventist families when pastors or other leaders have ignored victims calls for help.

As church leaders or individuals we can also become more involved in our community and partner with other ongoing domestic abuse prevention programs. We may assist a local shelter or domestic violence organization in their efforts to raise awareness in our community.

In other words, use your influence and refuse to support the culture perpetuated in music, movies, television, games, and the media that glorifies violence, particularly against women and children. When cases come before the church board, take it seriously and do not condone or protect the abuser because of his or her position in the church. Instead, use discipline appropriately and seek to refer both the victim and perpetrator for counseling.

## God's Ideal for families

God has left us plenty of counsel in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy to help us live in a home where angels and His love abound, and where there is no room of violence or abuse.

Consider this counsel:

### Tenderness

Ellen G. White writes in *Signs of the Times*:

"In many families there is a great lack in expressing affection one for another. While there is no need of sentimentalism, there is need of expressing love and **tenderness\*** in a chaste, pure, dignified way. Many absolutely cultivate hardness of heart and in word and action reveal the satanic side of the character.

**Tender affection** should ever be cherished between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. Every hasty word should be checked, and there should not be even the appearance of the lack of love one for another. It is the duty of everyone in the family to be pleasant, to speak **kindly**."<sup>12</sup>

### Respect

Ellen G. White writes in *Adventist Home*:

"Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for **rulership**. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to **respect** and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other. . . . **Do not try to compel each other** to do as you wish. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Manifestations of **self-will destroy** the peace and happiness of the home. Let not your married life be one of contention. If you do, you will both be unhappy. **Be kind in speech and gentle in action, giving up your own wishes.** Watch well your words, for they have a powerful influence for good or for ill. Allow **no sharpness** to come in."<sup>13</sup>

That is our duty. To have a home that is a little Heaven and where God and the angels can abide in. But here is the good news! Even when the relationship has not been healthy, abusive patterns exists there is always hope!

### Seeking Christ as the Helper

Ellen G. White writes in *Ministry of Healing*:

"Men and women can reach God's ideal for them if they will **take Christ as their helper**. What human wisdom cannot do, **His grace will accomplish** for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust. His providence can **unite hearts in bonds** that are of heavenly origin. **Love** will not be a mere exchange of soft and flattering words. The loom of heaven weaves with warp and woof finer, yet **more firm**, than can be woven by the looms of earth. **The result** is not a tissue fabric, but a **texture that will bear wear and test and trial**. Heart will be **bound** to heart in the golden bonds of a **love** that is enduring."<sup>14</sup>

### Hope for you too!

If you recognize that you are in a dysfunctional abusive relationship, remember to see yourself in the context of Biblical truth. You may not be able to talk to anyone about this yet. That is understandable. Don't believe what your abuser says about you; focus instead on what God says about you: "I have **called you by your name**, you are **Mine**" (Isaiah 43:1, NKJV).

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May each of us, men and women, young and old, seek wisdom from God in our family relationships. May we humbly allow God to teach us how to relate to each other in the way that is pleasing to Him and in ways that reflect His character. More importantly, may the words of our mouths and the actions our heart honor Him as we share His love with one another. For that is how the world will know we are true disciples of Jesus Christ.

\* Items in boldfaced type have been added for emphasis and do not appear in the books from which these quotations have been drawn.

## Notes

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**“LOVE GOD, YOUR GOD, WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART: LOVE HIM WITH ALL THAT’S IN YOU, LOVE HIM WITH ALL YOU’VE GOT! WRITE THESE COMMANDMENTS THAT I’VE GIVEN YOU TODAY ON YOUR HEARTS. GET THEM INSIDE OF YOU AND THEN GET THEM INSIDE YOUR CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT THEM WHEREVER YOU ARE, SITTING AT HOME OR WALKING IN THE STREET; TALK ABOUT THEM FROM THE TIME YOU GET UP IN THE MORNING TO WHEN YOU FALL INTO BED AT NIGHT.”**

**DEUTERONOMY 6:5-8 (MSG)**

In today’s world, family time is a rare commodity. Yet, the words of Deuteronomy still apply! Leadership is given to the parents. “Get them inside of YOU” first, God seems to say, **then** get them inside your children! The Lord is very clear about His expectation of home leadership; parents must obey His commandments first and then “get them inside their children.” Proverbs 22:6 gives instruction from the oldest parenting manual, the Bible: “Train up a child in the way he should go [teaching him to seek God’s wisdom and will for his abilities and talents], even when he is old he will not depart from it” (AMP). Yet, often today the teaching of principles to children is left to the school and the church. Note the

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# Social Media: Blessing or Curse!

WILMA KIRK-LEE

definition of leadership: a person who guides or directs a group.

In the not too distant past, families gathered around the dinner table and shared about their day with each other. Today, few families share a daily meal and when they are all in the same place, they are connected to the world beyond their table through their smartphones and other media.

Let’s look at some statistics from Common Sense Media, a leading source of entertainment and technology recommendations for families:

- Mobile media have become a nearly universal part of the children’s media landscape, across all levels of society.
- Nearly all (98 percent) children age 8 and under live in a home with some type of mobile device, the same percentage that have a TV in the home. Mobile media ownership is up from 75 percent in 2013 and 52 percent in 2011.
- Ninety-five percent of families with children age 8 and under now have a smartphone, up from 63 percent in 2013 and 41 percent in 2011, and 78 percent have a tablet (up from 40 percent in 2013 and 8 percent just six years ago in 2011).

- 42 percent of children now have their own tablet device—up from 7 percent four years ago and less than 1 percent in 2011.

According to a Pew survey conducted during 2014 and 2015, 94 percent of teens who go online using a mobile device do so daily. Teens use multiple social platforms. Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most popular, and 71 percent of teens say they use more than one social media site.

**“THE END AND CULMINATION OF ALL THINGS IS NEAR. THEREFORE, BE SOUND-MINDED AND SELF-CONTROLLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER [STAYING BALANCED AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD SO THAT YOUR COMMUNICATION WILL BE CLEAR, REASONABLE, SPECIFIC AND PLEASING TO HIM.]”**

**I PETER 4:7 (AMP)**

## The Challenge of Technology

Modern technology has brought never before dreamt of challenges to home and family life. Previous generations communicated to those outside the home using a phone that was attached to a wall in the family home. If you were away from home, you looked for a phonebooth and hoped you had a quarter to make the call. People would use the phone in the booth to speak with others and to leave information behind—names and numbers posted somewhere on the wall of the phone booth. Only people who entered that particular phone booth would know the name or number.

In the era of the phone booth, I was taught the following: “Fools names and fools faces are always found in public places!” In the age of “anonymous” social media seems, does this adage still apply? Yes it does—even though we are led to think that things posted online can’t be seen. **They are always there!** When today’s young people apply to college or for employment, someone reviews their social media account. What they have posted can make the difference between acceptance or rejection.

## Is there Any Hope?

So what’s a parent to do? How do today’s parents manage the ever-present media landscape? Do they have to move “off the grid” to prevent their children from using social media? What is the balance? These are great questions

The first thing to consider is this: Principles of value are usually **caught** not **taught**. Parents must examine at their own social media habits and usage. Everyone today owns a smartphone. Some children live in a home that does not have a landline just a smartphone. Adults pay for and distribute smartphones to their children in the home. They also make the smartphone the constant companion in their life. Healthy technology use must be demonstrated first by example. Parents must model this behavior or their children will never learn the lessons they hope to teach. Do we even know what is healthy use of technology and what is not?

No matter where you are or who you are, there is one thing in life that is the same for everyone: **Time!** Each of us is governed by 365 days a year, 52 weeks a year, 7 days per week, 24, 1140 minutes, and 86,000 seconds in a day. Our time belongs to God. Ellen White wrote that “Every moment is His and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 342).

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## Self-Control/Temperance in All Things

In order to train our children to learn self-control (temperance) when consuming or using media, self-control must be an intentional part of our family lifestyle. There’s a place for media, but there is nothing like “the ministry of **presence**.” Parents must provide an opportunity for children to share their feelings, concerns, doubts, and challenges without distraction or being rushed. This requires that parents prioritize how this time will be spent.

Again, the Lord asks us to prioritize our time with Him. Listen to Him speak in Psalm 46:10: “Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at Me, your High God, above politics, above everything” (MSG). Long before there was modern technology, God knew we could easily be distracted by our time priorities. When we place God first in our time priorities, He reminds us of the precious gifts He has entrusted to us in our children. He also reminds us to be the example for our children who in turn reflect His love to us.

Too often, temperance or self-control is only mentioned in relation issues of substance abuse. If we consider self-control (temperance) as a lifestyle, then we will be far more conscious of how we use things in this life that impact our time, including our devices. Paul states it this way, “Now every athlete who [goes into training and] competes in the games is disciplined and exercises self-control in all things,” (1 Corinthians 9:25, AMP).

**We should encourage temperate use of media that is age-appropriate.** Research shows that children under the age of six should not be allowed to use media. Additionally, parents should limit media usage for children older than six and restrict their access to media.

Phones and other media should be placed in a central, monitored location during meal times and at bedtime. When parents adhere to these guidelines and model them for their children, they are training up their children in the way that they should go. Remember principles are **caught not taught!**

Being a model leader is always difficult. Yet, our God entrusts us with training our children in the way they should go, and He’s also working on us at the same time! What a wonderful manifestation of love and grace. We provide our children with a healthy legacy by the time, memories, and feelings of connectedness with which they leave our homes. To accomplish this noble aspiration requires two things: **Time** and **Presence!** Both of these are priceless! The choice to use them wisely is up to us!

## Conclusion

It is time to look at how we spend our time. Is Sabbath the only time we give to the Lord and His work? Are we so busy making a living that we have forgotten how to live? Maybe small steps would help.

**Begin by encouraging daily Sabbath School study and personal worship time.** The discussions we have at the family table during our meals could be focused on what we learned from our time with God in study.

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- The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Kids Age Zero to Eight. (2017). Retrieved from [https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/research/census\\_researchreport.pdf](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/research/census_researchreport.pdf)
- Pew Research Survey. (2015, March 7-April 10). Retrieved from [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

(Use the following assessment to see how much time you spend with your own media.)

**HANDOUT**

# NOMOPHOBIA

*(irrational fear of being without your mobile phone  
or being unable to use your phone for some reason)*

Are you a smartphone junkie? Rate each item on a scale of 1 (“completely disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”) and tally up your total score to find out. Be honest!

1. I would feel uncomfortable without constant access to information through my smartphone.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. I would be annoyed if I could not look information up on my smartphone when I wanted to do so.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

3. Being unable to get the news (e.g., happenings, weather, etc.) on my smartphone would make me nervous.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

4. I would be annoyed if I could not use my smartphone and/or its capabilities when I wanted to do so.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

5. Running out of battery in my smartphone would scare me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

6. If I were to run out of credits or hit my monthly data limit, I would panic.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

7. If I did not have a data signal or could not connect to Wi-Fi, then I would constantly check to see if I had a signal or could find a Wi-Fi network.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

8. If I could not use my smartphone, I would be afraid of getting stranded somewhere.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

9. If I could not check my smartphone for a while, I would feel a desire to check it.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

10. If I did not have my smartphone with me ... I would feel anxious because I could not instantly communicate with my family and/or friends.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

11. I would be worried because my family and/or friends could not reach me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

12. I would feel nervous because I would not be able to receive text messages and calls.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

**HANDOUT**

13. I would be anxious because I could not keep in touch with my family and/or friends.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

14. I would be nervous because I could not know if someone had tried to get a hold of me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

15. I would feel anxious because my constant connection to my family and friends would be broken.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

16. I would be nervous because I would be disconnected from my online identity.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

17. I would be uncomfortable because I could not stay up-to-date with social media and online networks.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

18. I would feel awkward because I could not check my notifications for updates from my connections and online networks.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

19. I would feel anxious because I could not check my email messages.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

20. I would feel weird because I would not know what to do.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

**How You Score**

- 20:** Not at all ***nomophobic***. You have a very healthy relationship with your device and have no problem being separated from it.
- 21-60:** ***Mild nomophobia***. You get a little antsy when you forget your phone at home for a day or get stuck somewhere without WiFi, but the anxiety isn't too overwhelming.
- 61-100:** ***Moderate nomophobia***. You're pretty attached to your device. You often check for updates while you're walking down the street or talking to a friend, and you often feel anxious when you're disconnected. ***Time for a digital detox?***
- 101-120:** ***Severe nomophobia***. You can barely go for 60 seconds without checking your phone. It's the first thing you check in the morning and the last at night, and dominates most of your activities in-between. It might be time for a serious intervention.



2019  
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

# STRENGTHENING DISCIPLES

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

*Centennial Edition*

# Longings and Losses: Working with Grieving Families

DAVID AND BEVERLY SEDLACEK

## Goals and Objectives: Session One

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Define grief
2. Describe God's original intent for humanity
3. Identify five losses in the life of Jesus
4. Name three losses and longings individuals may experience
5. Identify normal grief process and Kübler-Ross stages of grief
6. Describe unexpected family grief such as trauma, adoption, loss of addiction
7. Identify 2 problems that may compound the grief process
8. Describe symptoms of complicated grief

## Grief and Suffering

It was never God's desire or intent that His human children should suffer. He created us as perfect, whole beings who would live eternally with himself. Suffering is an unfortunate but natural consequence of sin. Not only suffering, but death came as a consequence of sin. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Whenever human beings experience

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loss, suffering, or death, it is normal to also experience grief.

## A Definition of Grief

*Grief* is keen mental suffering or distress over a loss or affliction—a sharp sorrow—a painful regret. At the very heart of the grief definition is intense sorrow. Grief is a deep emotional response to a great loss.

## Loss in the Life of Jesus

Jesus himself suffered many losses during the course of His life here on earth, but it is also important to understand the profound losses that he experienced in heaven with the other members of the Godhead. They experienced the loss of Lucifer and a third of the angels. They suffered when Adam and Eve chose sin and instead inherited suffering and death. Are there ways that we can comfort God as he grieves the loss of so many of his children today?

When Jesus was on earth, He experienced the loss of his cousin, John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12). He experienced rejection at Nazareth, His home town (Matthew 13:53-58) and wept over Jerusalem. Abuse of any kind is accompanied by significant losses, such as a loss of innocence, capacity to trust, and safety, just to name a few. Jesus experienced physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse. On the cross He experienced what it was like to be forsaken and to lose connection with

His Father. Jesus experienced misunderstanding of his mission by His family and His own disciples. He was abandoned, denied, and betrayed by His disciples. Ultimately, He lost His very life. Jesus went through these experiences so that we might know that we have a Savior who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15).

## Grief and Loss in the Human Experience

It is important that we allow ourselves the human experience of grief in response to real losses such as the death of a loved one, divorce or separation, breakup with a significant other, loss of anything that has been significant to a person, or other significant losses in adulthood or childhood such as: loss of innocence or virginity, safety, possessions, friends when making a move, post-abortion syndrome, miscarriage, a job, children growing up and moving on, friends and teachers, control, or losses related to retirement.

### EXERCISE

Journal about grief that you have experienced in your life. As you do, identify specific losses that you have experienced. Write down feelings that you have had connected to these losses. If you have not been allowed to have feelings connected to real losses, are you willing to begin giving yourself permission to feel? Ask God for the gift of your feelings.

It is also important to realize that when our normal human longings are not met, we grieve their loss. Some typical human longings are listed below:

- Intimacy and Affection
- Connection
- Disappointment related to God
- Disappointment related to the Church Organization
- Time and Attention
- Affirmation

### EXERCISE

As you look through this list of normal human longings, can you identify yours from this list or perhaps other longings, those that you have had that have not been met. God gives you every desire and longing so that you may in turn bring it to him to see how he wants to fulfill it. Write about these longings in your journal.

## Unexpected Grief in Families

We normally think of grief related to the death of a loved one or other significant losses as mentioned above. It is important to realize that there are other losses that occur in families that may produce grief. For example, foster parents must be aware of the need for their foster children to grieve the loss of their biological parents and siblings. When a new child is born into the family, other children may grieve the loss of their favored position. When trauma occurs, a person may need to grieve losses such as safety and security, innocence, trust, etc. When a person overcomes an addiction, there may be a grief response to the loss of the substance, behavior, person, etc. that he/she has been addicted to because addicts develop significant relationships with the objects of their addiction.

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## Normal Grief

Grieving a significant loss takes time. Depending on the circumstances of a person's loss, grieving can take from weeks to years. Grieving helps a person gradually adjust to a new chapter of their life. Full awareness of a major loss can happen suddenly or over a few days or weeks. While an expected loss (such as a death after a long illness) can take a shorter time to absorb because it is anticipated, a sudden or tragic loss can take more time. Similarly, it can take time to grasp the reality of a loss that doesn't affect one's daily routine, such as a death in a distant city. During this time, a person may feel numb and seem distracted. They may obsess or yearn for the lost loved one. Funerals

and other rituals and events during this time may help one accept the reality of one's loss.

A person's way of feeling and expressing grief is unique to them and the nature of their loss. Some may feel irritable and restless, while others are quieter than usual, or need to be distant from or close to others. Some feel as if they aren't the same person they were before the loss. Don't be surprised by conflicting feelings while grieving. For example, it's normal to feel despair about a death or a job loss, yet also feel relief.

The grieving process does not happen in a step-by-step or orderly fashion. Grieving tends to be unpredictable, with sad thoughts and feelings coming and going, like a roller-coaster ride. After the early days of grieving, one may sense a lifting of numbness and sadness and experience a few days without tears. Then, for no apparent reason, the intense grief may strike again.

While grieving may make one want to isolate themselves from others and hold it all in, it's important that they find some way of expressing their grief. Some modes of expression include talking, writing, creating art or music, or being physically active. All of these are helpful ways of dealing with grief.

## The Grief Process

Several years ago Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, Swiss-American psychiatrist, described grief in stages. While we have come to learn more recently that grief does not always occur in easily definable stages, it is helpful to know the typical process that most people experience when they grieve.

**1) Denial, numbness, and shock:** This stage serves to protect the individual from experiencing the intensity of the loss. It may be useful when the grieving person must take action (for example, making funeral arrangements). Numbness is a normal reaction to an immediate loss and should not be confused with "lack of caring." As the individual slowly acknowledges the

impact of the loss, denial and disbelief will diminish.

- 2) **Bargaining:** This stage may involve persistent thoughts about what could have been done to prevent the loss. People can become preoccupied about ways that things could have been better. If this stage is not properly resolved, intense feelings of remorse or guilt may interfere with the healing process.
- 3) **Depression:** This stage of grief occurs in some people after they realize the true extent of the loss. Signs of depression may include sleep and appetite disturbances, a lack of energy and concentration, and crying spells. A person may feel loneliness, emptiness, isolation, and self-pity.
- 4) **Anger:** This reaction usually occurs when an individual feels helpless and powerless. Anger can stem from a feeling of abandonment through a loved one's death. An individual may be angry at the person who died, at God, or toward life in general.
- 5) **Acceptance:** In time, an individual may be able to come to terms with various feelings and accept the fact that the loss has occurred. Healing can begin once the loss becomes integrated into the individual's set of life experiences.

Different people follow different paths through the grieving experience. The order and timing of these phases may vary from person to person: accepting the reality of their loss, allowing themselves to experience the pain of their loss, adjusting to a new reality in which the deceased is no longer present, and enjoying other relationships.

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## EXERCISE

Since there are many ways of grieving, try to identify ways that you express grief. Share your grief process with a close friend or in a small group.

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## Complicated Grief

In this complex and busy world, it can be hard to fully grieve a loss. It is possible to have

unresolved grief or complications associated with grieving, particularly if a person had several major losses in a short period of time; lost someone very important in their life; the person may feel that they will never get over the loss of someone special; experienced the unexpected or violent death of a loved one, such as the death of a child or a death caused by an accident, homicide, or suicide; have special life circumstances that act as obstacles to grieving, such as having to return to work too soon after a death; or have a history of depression or anxiety. If these symptoms of grief persist more than a year, it may be a sign of complicated grief.

For some people, feelings of loss are debilitating and don't improve even after time passes. This is known as complicated grief, sometimes called persistent complex bereavement disorder. In complicated grief, painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that a person has trouble recovering from the loss and resuming their own life.

During the first few months after a loss, many signs and symptoms of normal grief are the same as those of complicated grief. However, while normal grief symptoms gradually start to fade over time, those of complicated grief linger or get worse. Complicated grief is like being in an ongoing, heightened state of mourning that keeps a person from healing.

The following may be symptoms or indicators of complicated grief:

- Intense sorrow, pain, and rumination over the loss of your loved one
- Focus on little else but your loved one's death
- Extreme focus on reminders of the loved one or excessive avoidance of reminders
- Intense and persistent longing or pining for the deceased
- Problems accepting the death
- Numbness or detachment
- Bitterness about one's loss
- Feeling that life holds no meaning or purpose
- Lack of trust in others
- An inability to enjoy life or think back on positive experiences with one's loved one

Complicated grief also may be indicated if a person continues to have trouble carrying out normal daily routines, isolates from others and withdraws from social activities, experiences depression, deep sadness, guilt or self-blame related to the loss, believes that they did something wrong or could have prevented the death, feels that life isn't worth living without their loved one, or wishes that they had died along with their loved one.

When there are symptoms of complicated grief present, it is important to make a referral to a mental health professional who will be able to assess the severity of the grief response and make appropriate interventions to help resolve the grief. Interventions can include talk therapy, behavioral interventions, or perhaps medication.

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### EXERCISE

Would you know where to refer someone who is experiencing Complicated Grief? Explore the phone book, the internet, or community information services to find mental health professionals who have been trained to help during times of grief.

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### Goals and Objectives Session Two

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. List five statements that are not to be said to grieving individuals
2. Three skills necessary to be a "compassionate consoler" for others
3. Identify 3 areas in which the church can show support for the grieving individual over time
4. Describe the use of scripture in experiencing the comfort of God
5. Identify 3 ways the role of the pastor and chaplain are important in the grief process

### Helping others in the Grief Process: How to be a Compassionate Comforter

Spirituality often is part of the grieving process. A person often finds themselves looking

for or questioning the higher purpose of a loss. They ask “why” questions. Many find comfort in their religious or spiritual beliefs, while others may doubt their beliefs in the face of traumatic or senseless loss. When this happens, show your support to the grieving person. This includes emotional support but also practical support in the form of meals, phone calls, cards and so forth. It is often helpful to grieve with family members, if possible, to share memories and experiences whether the loss was a death in the family or another form of loss.

### **What Not to Say to a Grieving Person**

Most people do not intend to be insensitive to a person experiencing grief. Many are out of touch with their own feelings and, therefore, find it difficult to connect meaningfully to a grieving person. When you don’t know what to say, it is better to say nothing at all. Just your presence is saying that you care.

Sometimes, well-meaning people can wound a grieving person by saying the following things: “Don’t feel that way.” “God just needed another angel.” “You are young. You can have another child.” “God doesn’t give you more than you can handle.” “We may not understand it, but it was God’s will.” “At least she lived a long life; many people die young.” “He is in a better place.” “She brought this on herself.” “There is a reason for everything.” “Aren’t you over him yet, he has been dead for a while now.” “She was such a good person that God wanted her to be with him.” “I know how you feel.” “She did what she came here to do and it was her time to go.” “Be strong.”

### **Helpful Things to do**

It is important to allow a person to have their grief process and to not try to “fix” them. Often, the most helpful thing to do is simply to listen empathically, that is, with all of your attention and focus as if that person were the only person in the world at this moment. The “ministry of presence” can be helpful – just

being there with them helps to soothe feelings of loss and loneliness. Attempt to assess what the person may need at the time. Not everyone grieves in the same way. Try not to let your feelings get in the way. Address your own discomfort with the pain of seeing yourself or others grieving, and get out of your comfort zone to meet the needs of the other person.

Be attentive to providing support after the immediate loss, as it will continue to be needed. Assist your church community to establish rituals that would show respect and honor to the deceased (in the case of death). Examples might include: tying a black ribbon where the person may have routinely sat in church or “FIRSTs”. Firsts refer to significant first holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries related to the loss. Anniversaries can be times full of painful memories. Remembering and being sensitive to a person’s need for comfort during these times, especially anniversaries can be an important ministry to a grieving person.

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### **GROUP EXERCISE**

From the information above, identify things that you have said or done that have been helpful or unhelpful. Have you addressed your own feelings during times of grief? Write about what you have learned that has been especially helpful.

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### **A Special Note to Pastors and Chaplains**

You will often be called upon to conduct a funeral or memorial service. The service may or may not be for a person who is a Christian. It is important to spend time getting to know the family. They may or may not know how to grieve or celebrate the life of their loved one. Inquire about their desire for the setting and structure of the service. They may look to you for suggestions about how to structure a funeral or memorial service. Remember that it is for them and not for you. Evaluate carefully whether integrating Adventist doctrine into the service would be in the family’s best interest.

The better you know the person, the more effectively you will be able to speak words of comfort. You will know what they need and be able to surround them to the kind of help that they truly need.

## **Experiencing the Comfort of God**

Scripture is filled with words of instruction and comfort for those traveling the journey of grief. Some examples of Scriptures that are used to comfort others include the classic Psalms 23. Other Scriptures include:

- “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope in you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort” (2 Cor 1:3-11).
- “The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles (outcasts) of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Ps 147:2-3).
- “A merry (cheerful) heart is good medicine, but a broken (crushed) spirit dries the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).
- “The human spirit can endure in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?” (Proverbs 18:14).
- “A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but by sorrow of the heart, the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 15:13).

There is power in the living Word of God as it is spoken into the heart of a hurting, grieving human person. Many will never have experienced the power of God in real ways in their lives. Others, during times of grief, lose hold of their trust and confidence in God. Below are some reminders to anchor persons in God during times

of grief. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart.” A living connection between the Comforter and the Spirit of God is essential to effective prayer ministry of comfort. Many people have never experienced comfort in their own lives as humans. They’ve not been permitted to have normal human feelings, and therefore have little or no framework in which to put comfort from God.

It is important to recall that Jesus Himself was touched with the feelings of our infirmities when He was born to an unwed mother, had no earthly father, was a refugee, struggled to surrender His will to His Father in Gethsemane, was betrayed by a kiss, sold for the price of a slave, stripped naked, physically, verbally, and mentally, and violated by the religious leaders. Jesus was shamed, humiliated, and embarrassed by men in power over him who should have been protecting Him and supporting Him. He was tempted to numb His pain when His situation seemed to be hopeless and useless. He cried out “My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?” in the midst of being unfairly treated, unjustly accused, rejected, arrested, convicted, and murdered as He was suffering and dying for our sin, shame, and guilt.

Jesus was tempted to relinquish His identity from the beginning to the end of His life. At the beginning of his public ministry, Satan tempted him in the wilderness to doubt His identity by declaring “If you are the Son of God.” At the end of his ministry, He was taunted on the cross by the Jewish leaders, by the Roman soldiers and by the thief on the cross with the same words.

During times of grief, people must face difficult questions such as “Why, God?” “Why did you not stop the abuse?” “Why did you give me these broken parents?” “Why did you let my child die?” “Why did you allow this miscarriage to happen?” Rather than discourage them from having these feelings, even feelings of anger at God, they need to be supported in expressing these feelings.

Both Job (Job 15) and David (Psalm 22 and more) engaged in healthy biblical lament. They freely expressed their feelings to God. If we truly believe in a compassionate God, we will not fear God's wrath when we lament during times of loss and grief. God is big enough to handle our feelings. Rather than fearing Jesus, invite Him into the places of pain and grief in our experience. Pray Scriptures such as the following into our hearts and those of others: "The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of

singing" (Isaiah 51:3). "In all your sufferings, he also suffered. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years" (Isaiah 63:9).

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### GROUP EXERCISE

Write about times in your life when you have experienced Jesus as being particularly close to you. How about far away? How have you been comforted by God? Do you experience God's comfort through internalizing his word? Share your thoughts and experiences with others in a small group.

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# First Mission Outpost: The Family

ALINA BALTAZAR AND  
SILVIA CANALE BACCHIOCCHI

“OUR WORK FOR CHRIST IS TO BEGIN WITH THE FAMILY, IN THE HOME.... THERE IS NO MISSIONARY FIELD MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS.”  
THE ADVENTIST HOME, 35

## The Family: Origin, Creation, and Redemption

Before anything existed—on earth or even in the universe—there was God. And this Being existed as the harmonious unity of three Persons. In a way, we could say that the concept of family was established before the foundation of the earth, being present in God’s very nature: the beautiful harmony of three in one. At creation, God extended His relational love to His children, made in His image. His desire was that they would return His love through their faithful actions and thereby grow closer to Him daily. Tragically, both Adam and Eve chose to exercise faith in Satan’s lie instead of God’s explicit word, and their disobedience resulted in the rupture of earth’s first family, comprised of God and the human pair. But God, in His tender mercy, provided a way of escape through Christ—the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). In this first

succinct covenant promise the entire plan of salvation was presented, and it was presented to the father and mother of the human race. Their divinely-ordained mission to their family was, in essence, their mission to the world. And it is the same for us today. Our mission to the world begins at home: bringing the gospel message of redemption to bear fruit for eternity in the lives of each member of our families. Then, from the mission outposts of our homes, our children will be equipped to reach out in love and ministry to the wider world.

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## Ellen White’s Role as Family Counselor

The Seventh-day Adventist church has been uniquely blessed with the prophetic voice of Ellen White—faithful wife, loving mother, and fervent missionary. In *The Adventist Home* she has left tender encouragement and practical counsel to families living in earth’s probationary period (begun in October, 1844). Although the family has always been integral in educating young minds for God’s mission field (Deut. 6:6–8, cf. 4:6), the devotion of parents in training their children is even more critical today as we live in the time of God’s investigative judgement. The devil knows his time is short, and his intensified deceptions and temptations require that we arm ourselves with a deeper knowledge of Scripture and the counsels of Ellen White. Adventist families today often

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resort to various interventions, some of which may be helpful, tending to “go with the flow” of society at large. Though, there are times reaching out to Christian professionals is advisable; as in the case of medical problems, mental illness, or substance abuse. Yet the Creator of the family unit is the best qualified to resolve our problems. As such, our first response should be to go to Him in prayer, consulting both Scripture and what He has advised through His messenger, Ellen White. In this way God will frequently lead us to a solution that is simpler than first imagined, helping us to avoid costly and/or painful interventions. This will also strengthen our family’s faith and allow us to give God the glory. God has given us trained members of our community to provide care along the way. Because this article will only present a few basic guidelines pertaining to the missionary role of the family, we highly encourage all readers to purchase a copy of *The Adventist Home* and consult it regularly, as Ellen White’s counsel will prove an invaluable source of wisdom for meeting trials of many kinds—and emerging from them victorious.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. White assures us that “the Lord is served as much, yea, more, by faithful home work than by the one who teaches the word” (*AH*, 236).

If God designed the family unit as the first training ground to restore harmony between heaven and earth, this is our most important mission field, and our homes will be blessed only to the degree that we are faithful to this calling. In other words, our families will be truly happy only when we put God’s priorities first, educating our children to love Him and obey His written Word. And when we do this daily and painstakingly, our light will begin to shine far beyond our four walls: “The mission of the home extends beyond its own members. The Christian home is to be an object lesson, illustrating the excellence of the true principles of life. Such an illustration will be a power for good in the world. As the youth go out from such a home, the lessons they have learned are imparted. Nobler principles of life are introduced into other households, and an uplifting influence works in the community” (*AH*, 31).

### POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Where have you turned for help when struggling with parenting concerns? What has been the most helpful?

### The Family as Mission Center

Although missionary zeal has waned since the great religious awakening that captured the popular imagination in the 1800s and 1900s, it must be revived today and this revival must begin in our homes. “Home religion is fearfully neglected. Men and women show much interest in foreign missions. They give liberally to them and thus seek to satisfy their conscience, thinking that giving to the cause of God will atone for their neglect to set a right example in the home. But the home is their special field, and no excuse is accepted by God for neglecting this field” (*AH*, 318). Many might think that the true man or woman of God is the evangelist who preaches God’s Word to hundreds and thousands, but

### Love and Obedience

Faithfulness to our home ministry begins very early, even before our children are born. This is, ideally, when the future parents prepare their minds and bodies to pass on—in the infant’s very DNA—habits and principles that will strengthen their ability to fight on the side of right.<sup>2</sup> And while children need nutritious food to develop strong physical constitutions, they need the daily nourishment of their parents’ unconditional love and consistent discipline even more. Love, and the boundaries that love places, feeds every aspect of our little ones and forms the spiritual foundation that will encourage them in the ways of heaven. Unfortunately, a love relationship with our children does not come automatically. Notice what Ellen White says, “Parents should study the best and most successful manner of winning the love and confidence of their children, that they may lead them in the right path.” (*AH*, 190). Did you see that? We *must* study the best and most successful way to win their love! Love is the result of concentrated effort and diligent study

to know what will bind our children's hearts to us. In other words, love is a battle that we must fight every day to win! Satan is doing all he can to frustrate us in this struggle, but we must persevere since only by love is love awakened. Although each child's love language is different, the guidelines provided below—drawn from *The Adventist Home*—will prove invaluable in helping us win the love war with our children.<sup>3</sup> Because when our children know that we love them and want to make them happy, they will open their hearts to us and be eager to do what pleases us—and, more importantly, what pleases God.

### Connection Before Direction

A wise author advises parents that the key to binding their children's hearts is to "connect before they direct."<sup>4</sup> This is the same principle that Ellen White advocates: "Parents, let your children see that you love them and will do all in your power to make them happy. If you do so, your necessary restrictions will have far greater weight in their young minds" (*AH*, 193). Before we ask our children to do anything, they should first feel connected to us so that their hearts will be open to receiving direction. This can be easily done with a smile, hug, or warm words of gratitude or encouragement. Connection (love) before direction (discipline) shows our children that our relationship with them matters more to us than their actions. If we direct without love, we will likely need to resort to bribes or threats to achieve the desired behavior, and our children's compliance will be fleeting. But when our first priority is to woo our children into a loving relationship, they will more naturally want to comply with our direction and eventually make it part of their habitual character.

### Smiles and Patient Tones

Connection and love bloom easiest when there is sunshine in the home, warm smiles, courteous ways and loving words. God intended that "home should be a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated instead of being studiously repressed. Our happiness depends upon this cultivation of love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another" (*AH*, 15). Often the tender attentions and encouragements of the early years disappear

by the time our little ones reach two or three years and start getting into mischief. As their curiosity and desire for independence grows, they may enter dangerous zones that elicit from us more words of prohibition than of acceptance and encouragement. After the "terrible twos" some parents may experience the relative lull of compliant childhood before the onslaught of the trying tween and teen years erupts. Yet the older our children are, the more they need our smiles and patient tones.

The foundation of home government begins with knitting hearts together. When our children hear love in our voices and it expressed on our faces they will be drawn to us, "The perception of children is quick, and they discern patient, loving tones from the impatient, passionate command, which dries up the moisture of love and affection in the hearts of children (*AH*, 242). Today more than ever, children are tempted at every turn; if parents are not available to engage them lovingly and encouragingly, their affections will lean on the ubiquitous presence of their peers, technology, or other influences (such as alcohol, drugs, and immorality) that will likely prove disastrous. The only solution is to "kindly instruct them and bind them to your hearts. It is a critical time for children. Influences will be thrown around them to wean them from you which you must counteract. Teach them to make you their confidant. Let them whisper in your ear their trials and joys" (*AH*, 191). And when they open their hearts to us, sharing their temptations and mourning their failures, let us be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry (James 1:19). Instead of reproach, let us show Christ's compassion, loving encouragement and total forgiveness.

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### POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What age was the most challenging to be loving with your children? How did you overcome those difficulties?

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### A United Front

Without a doubt, the most important element necessary for a solid foundation of

loving discipline in the home lies in the union of the parents. If parents want a loving home, it must start with them: “The atmosphere surrounding the souls of fathers and mothers fills the whole house, and is felt in every department of the home. To a large extent parents create the atmosphere of the home circle, and when there is disagreement between father and mother, the children partake of the same spirit. Make your home atmosphere fragrant with tender thoughtfulness. If you have become estranged and have failed to be Bible Christians, be converted.” (*AH*, 16). Wow! Could it be that the reason our children argue or complain is because they’ve seen it modeled in the home? Let us look soberly inside our own hearts and, with God’s help, make the necessary changes (conversion) in our personal lives and marriages.

Love, as they say, is in the details, in the little thoughtful actions that may at times seem superfluous. Yet here is where smiles and patient tones should begin: “A husband and wife should cultivate respect and affection for each other. They should guard the spirit, the words, and the actions so that nothing will be said or done to irritate or annoy. Each is to have a care for the other, doing all in their power to strengthen their mutual affection” (*AH*, 345). While parents might at times disagree with each other, “the father and mother should never in the presence of their children criticize each other’s plans and judgment” (*AH*, 314). If an issue needs to be addressed in front of the children (for example, if you’re in a car and need to make a quick decision), make sure that your children see you work it out with thoughtful consideration for your spouse. These are incredible teaching moments where your attitude as a couple says more to them than the most eloquent of sermons.

### **Structure and Discipline**

Next, after demonstrating the principle of love and respect for each other, parents, as co-regents in the home, must present a united front before their children in relation to discipline. In other words, mom and dad need to agree about house rules and the consequences for breaking them. Imagine if God’s Word were filled with conflicting messages and instructions, one from the Father, another from Christ, and still

another from the Holy Spirit! Thankfully, the message from the Trinity is always consistent and has been neatly summarized in the Ten Commandments. It must be the same in our homes. Using God’s commandments as a guide, make your rules few and clear: “If parents are united in this work of discipline, the children will understand what is required of them. But if the father, by word or look, shows that he does not approve of the discipline the mother gives; if he feels that she is too strict and thinks that he must make up for the harshness by petting and indulgence, the child will be ruined.” (*AH*, 315). However, “if the father and mother in the love and fear of God unite their interests to have authority in the home, they will see the necessity of much prayer, much sober reflection. And as they seek God, their eyes will be opened to see heavenly messengers present to protect them in answer to the prayer of faith” (*AH*, 315). Isn’t it wonderful that simply being united in prayer will invite the presence of angels into our home to help us lovingly discipline our children?

### **Dealing with Disobedience**

Although God’s ideal for the family is to live in perfect harmony, where each family member conveys, in look and tone, only kindness and respect for one other, the reality is that none of us are angels and we will often fall short of this ideal. Here is where we as parents must be careful not to pull the splinter from our child’s eye while a branch impales our own. For instance, reprimanding a child for not cleaning up his room while our own room or office looks like it was hit by a small tornado, won’t work. Children are extremely perceptive and will note this hypocrisy, which will bar our influence with them. Instead, we could say, “Looks like we both need to put a bit of time into cleaning our spaces, let’s see who can finish first!” Similarly, yelling at our teenager who has lost their patience and hit their sibling won’t work either. Instead, as soon as the Holy Spirit brings our faults before us, we should be quick to note our own shortcomings and confess them to our children. If we yell at our child, rather than excusing ourselves, it is much better to say: “I’m really disappointed in myself and sorry I hurt you. Will you forgive me?” If our children see our humility and contrition, they will more easily acknowledge

their own wrongdoings and candidly confess. In short, while the goal is to lead by a Christ-like example, when we fall from the mark, let's swallow our pride and give our children the example of humility and repentance—and ask for their forgiveness.

After we have attended to the horizontal dimension of confession and forgiveness with each other, it is time to bring our sacrifice of repentance to the Lord. This is one of the primary ways in which we help our families reconnect with our heavenly Father—seeking forgiveness, expressing gratitude and growing in the knowledge of God. All this occurs most effectively in the context of family worship.

### **POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

What are some mistakes you have made as a parent? What are ways we can make up to our children when we make mistakes?

### **Family Worship**

#### **The Example of Ancient Israel**

A spirited and love-filled family worship is quite possibly the single most important tool in our arsenal to unleash the protection and blessings of God in our families and communities. Looking back at God's actions in history, we note that God's purpose in redeeming the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was that they might share a sanctuary home with Him, where they would learn to worship God correctly and thereby receive His bountiful blessings (Exod. 15: 17; 25:8). In other words, it was through this sanctuary system of worship that the gaping chasm caused by sin and rebellion was to be bridged, each sacrifice foreshadowing the one perfect Lamb who would take away the sin of the world (Isa. 53:7; John 1:29). In this way the earthly sanctuary was a place where the Israelites confessed their sins, praised God, and were taught by the priests to live lives that distinguished between right and wrong (Lev. 10:10). This holy lifestyle would then draw the nations to Israel and to worship the one true God (Deut. 4:5–6).

### **Morning and Evening Sacrifice**

Just as the priest offered the burnt offering—symbolizing the atonement of Christ—once at morning and again at twilight (Exod. 29:39), “morning and evening the father, as priest of the household, should confess to God the sins committed by himself and his children through the day. Those sins which have come to his knowledge and also those which are secret, of which God’s eye alone has taken cognizance, should be confessed. This rule of action, zealously carried out by the father when he is present or by the mother when he is absent, will result in blessings to the family” (AH, 212).

Here we note at least three elements of family worship: 1) it should be daily, both morning and evening, 2) parents—either the father or mother—must lead out *zealously* and 3) it will result in great blessings to our families. When we sacrifice what seems urgent for what is truly of eternal consequence, God will bless us beyond what we have experienced! These three elements also underscore another crucial point: Worship is non-negotiable.

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### **Worship is Non-Negotiable**

Just as the parents in ancient Israel educated their children to appreciate sanctuary worship (Deut. 6:6), we as parents in spiritual Israel must do likewise. Unfortunately, the flurry of activities that assaults families tempts many of us to put family worship on the backburner or engage in it only sporadically, when time permits. Yet notice what Ellen White says, “Family worship should not be governed by circumstances. You are not to pray occasionally and, when you have a large day’s work to do, neglect it. In thus doing you lead your children to look upon prayer as of no special consequence.... Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God’s altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations” (*Child Guidance*, 520). Here we see that family worship doesn’t just bring us closer to God, it literally brings the physical protection of angels to our families, shielding us not only from physical harm, but also from temptation! Neglecting family worship would be like heading out in the car for a family trip

without bothering to buckle our seatbelts, or going out in a boat without life preservers—unthinkable!

### **Make it Short and Sweet**

A final word about family worship: shorter is often sweeter. “Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered, this precious service becomes wearisome, and it is a relief when it is over” (*CG*, 521). The goal is to direct the mind to God in praise, gratitude and prayers for forgiveness and blessings. Tailor the content and length of your worships to the age and attention span of your children. If your child has a hard time sitting still, let them color, draw or do a nature puzzle while listening to the reading. Regarding length, follow the lead of your child, some children love to have Bible stories read to them and ask for more, while others (especially during the tween and teen years) may be in a rush with homework or other tasks. While brevity is often key during the week, Sabbaths are a special time for worshiping God; as such, more time should be devoted to Bible readings and spiritual discussions. Family worship on Sabbath should be the sweetest not only because we have spiritual and physical refreshment during those hours, but because we can often worship in our homes with extended family members and friends. This is indeed a little foretaste of heaven!

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### **POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

Share some family worship ideas.

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### **Working for Eternal Rewards**

We have seen that our mission as parents is to lead our children, day by day, to love and serve Christ. But that is much easier said than done. As a mother, Ellen White keenly sensed the responsibility of her divine appointment against the many shortcomings in her boys, of whom she had four.<sup>5</sup> Most likely speaking from her own experience she advises parents to persevere

in prayer, looking in faith for the eternal reward, “Parents should labor with reference to the future harvest. While they sow in tears, amid many discouragements, it should be with earnest prayer. They may see the promise of but a late and scanty harvest, yet that should not prevent the sowing. They should sow beside all waters, embracing every opportunity both to improve themselves and to benefit their children. Such seed sowing will not be in vain. At the harvest time many faithful parents will return with joy, bringing their sheaves with them” (*AH*, 533).

On the flip side she warns, “Parents who have neglected their God-given responsibilities must meet that neglect in the judgment. The Lord will then inquire, ‘Where are the children that I gave you to train for Me? Why are they not at My right hand?’ Many parents will then see that unwise love blinded their eyes to their children’s faults and left those children to develop deformed characters unfit for heaven. Others will see that they did not give their children time and attention, love and tenderness; their own neglect of duty made the children what they are.” (*CG*, 561).

Thankfully, while there is life there is hope! If we have been negligent as parents, let us acknowledge this candidly, confess it, and move on in faith. Today is the day of our salvation! As Ellen White stated, our prayers for wisdom to lead our children in the ways of heaven will elicit the help of angels! Let us live each day—and teach our children to live each day—with our eyes fixed on the prize of an eternity with Jesus. This earth is not our home, we are pilgrims here, but even though our time here is transitory it is of eternal value. Let us therefore make the most of each opportunity, making decisions that will honor God and bless our families.

### **Enjoying the Journey with our Heavenly Father**

While the work of parents is a demanding twenty-four seven job, we should never be discouraged because God has not left us alone to do the work! The assurance He gave Joshua, as leader of the family of Israel, is the same He gives

to parents of spiritual Israel today: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord you God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). Let us always remember that our children belong first and foremost to the Lord, which means He is infinitely more concerned with their present and eternal wellbeing than the most devoted of parents among us. “The God of heaven marks your solicitude, your earnest work, your constant watchfulness. He hears your prayers. With patience and tenderness train your children for the Lord. *All heaven is interested in your work.... God will unite with you, crowning your efforts with success*” (AH, 205, emphasis supplied).

While we will certainly see some fruit of our efforts this side of heaven, we will never know the full extent of our success till we get to heaven. “The work of wise parents will never be appreciated by the world, but when the judgement shall sit and the books shall be opened, their work will appear as God views it and will be rewarded before men and angels. It will be seen that one child who has been brought up in a faithful way has been a light in the world. It cost tears and anxiety and sleepless nights to oversee the character building of this child, but the work was done wisely, and the parents hear the “Well done” of the Master” (AH, 536). What a wonderful encouragement! Let us remember to make this mission to our family—to bring up our children to love and obediently serve their Creator—our top priority. It won’t be easy, but with God on our side we can enjoy the journey, trusting that He is guiding us and blessing every effort, answering every prayer. Let us remember that “one well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached” (AH, 32). If this is so, then let us preach to the world through our families. And perhaps, by God’s grace, when we get to heaven we may see that our faithful home lives have not only helped to redeem our own children, but also influenced the eternal destinies of countless others. With this goal in mind, let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our family’s faith.

## POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTION:

How can we support one another in our spiritual journey as parents? What can help us persevere?

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Two other books we highly recommend for families are *Child Guidance and Messages to Young People*. These and other Ellen White books are available for free through the EGW app (reading) and in audio version through ellenwhiteaudio.org.

<sup>2</sup> It has only been recently (the last decade) that health professionals have begun to counsel moms—and dads—to go through pre-pregnancy detoxes, which include both physical, mental and spiritual cleansing. If you google, “pregnancy detox” you will get nearly 6,000 results, if you google “mental and spiritual detox for pregnancy” the results are nearly 3,000,000! Even though science is only now proving how intricately the parent’s pre-pregnancy mindset and lifestyle affect the lifelong health of their baby, over 150 years ago Ellen White was already advising mothers to pay close attention to their physical and spiritual health before conceiving, as the law of heredity meant that their offspring would necessarily carry the results of these choices. See chapter 43, “Prenatal Influences,” in *The Adventist Home*.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell have noted five basic love languages in children: 1) physical affection, 2) words of affirmation, 3) quality time, 4) gifts and 5) acts of service. They also help parents to discover their child’s primary love language to more effectively reach their hearts. See *The 5 Love Languages of Children* (Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate, *Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Sadly, only two of Ellen White’s sons lived to adulthood—James Edson and William Clarence (Willie). John Herbert died at three months and the Henry Nichols died when he was sixteen years old, of pneumonia.



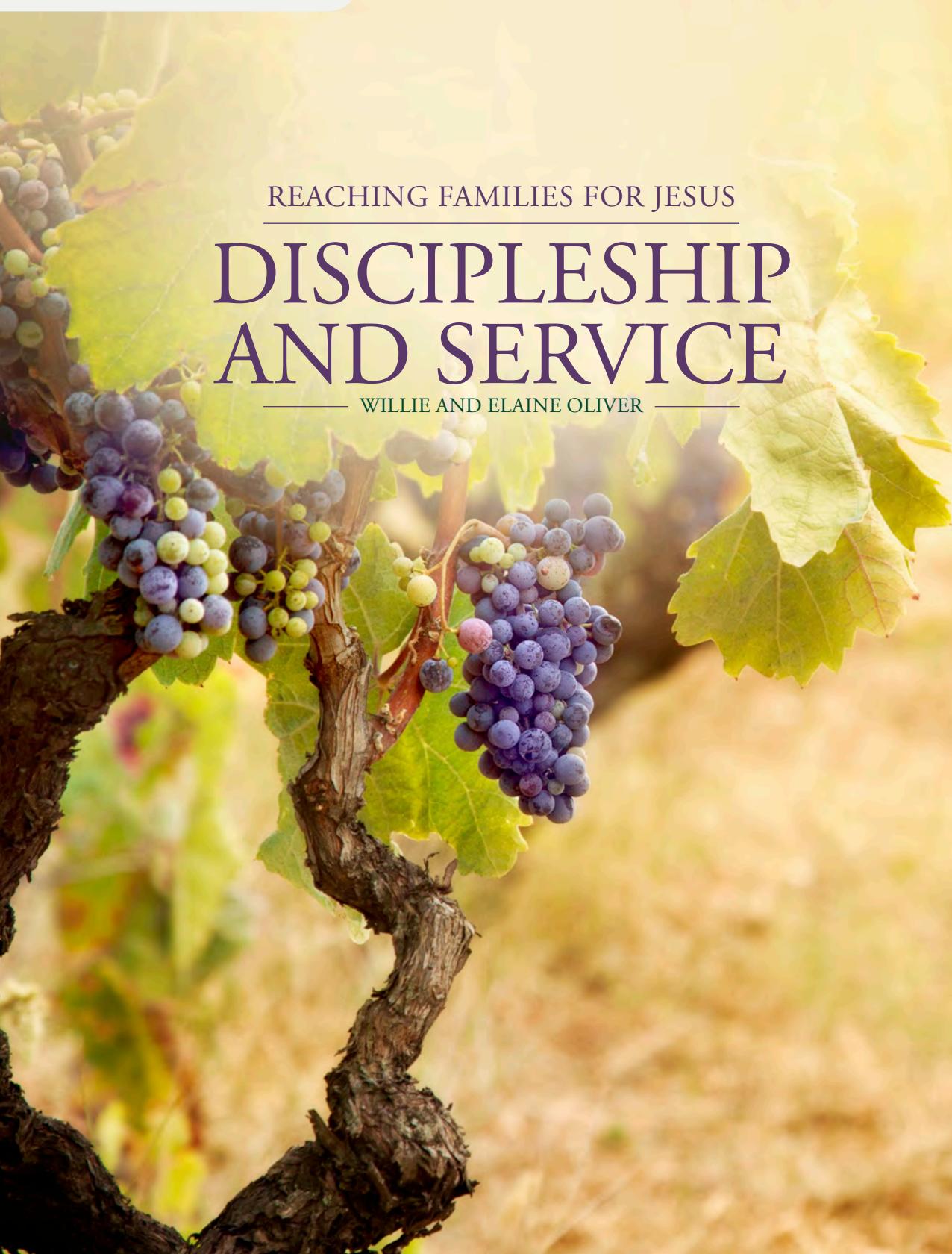
2018  
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

# DISCIPLESHP AND SERVICE

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



# Building a Healthy Home

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

## NOTE:

Please provide the handouts to those participating in this workshop. Download the printing file from:  
<http://family.adventist.org/planbook2018>

Today we're going to help you build a home, not just a house. But to show you how to build a healthy home, we're going to use the model of a house.

## The Text

**FOR WHICH OF YOU, INTENDING TO BUILD A TOWER, DOES NOT SIT DOWN FIRST AND COUNT THE COST, WHETHER HE HAS ENOUGH TO FINISH IT LEST, AFTER HE HAS LAID THE FOUNDATION, AND IS NOT ABLE TO FINISH, ALL WHO SEE IT BEGIN TO MOCK HIM, SAYING, "THIS MAN BEGAN TO BUILD AND WAS NOT ABLE TO FINISH."**

LUKE 14:28-30, NKJV

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## INTRODUCTION

There are many different types of homes. [You may use pictures of different types of dwellings – a straw house, an apartment building, a two-story house, a mansion, a small house]

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## I. SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

The best foundation for a healthy home is a spiritual foundation. Please read Matthew 7:24-25 and Joshua 24:15).

### 1. A Spiritual Family Worships Together.

The spiritual family chooses to attend and be involved in a church that teaches the Word of God from the pulpit, from each Sabbath school class, and from every platform of leadership.

**2. A Spiritual Family Honors God's Word and Applies it in Their Home.** The spiritual family teaches, reads aloud, discusses, and reveres the Word of God. They realize that nothing is more important than teaching God's Word in their home because it is alive, life-changing, and eternal. When should you talk about God's Word according to Deuteronomy 6:7?

**3. Spiritual Families Make Prayer a Daily Part of Their Home Life.**

## II. TRUST & COMMITMENT

### 1. Commitment

Most people repeat wedding vows on their wedding day that include words such as:

"I, (NAME OF THE GROOM), take you, (NAME OF THE BRIDE), to be my lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." We make these vows as a lifetime commitment. In their Book, "The Long-term Marriage," Floyd and Harriet Thatcher wrote: "This commitment cannot be a one-time affirmation, for buried within each of us is the deep psychological need for constant reassurance, to know where we stand with our partner in the relationship of marriage. It is the awareness that we are loved and accepted that builds our own sense of self-esteem and self-acceptance and makes it possible to give and express love in return."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Trust

Trust is strengthened when there is complete honesty. Complete honesty includes:

- Historical Honesty – There should nothing in your past that your spouse, or future spouse, does not know.
- Emotional Honesty – You should be able to share your feelings with those in your family without fear.
- Present Honesty – There should be no secrets as to where you are, who you are with, what you're doing, etc.
- Future Honesty – What are your goals and plans for the future?

## III. PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

Many people never prepare for marriage. What should you do to prepare for a lifetime together with your spouse?

**1. Marry a Believer.** The Apostle Paul stated: *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? – 2 Corinthians 6:14-15*

Someone said, "Love is like a pair of socks, you have to have two and they gotta match." (UNKNOWN) Many Christians – indeed, many Adventists – believe that once they are married, the unbeliever will be convinced to

become a Christian/Adventist. Does that ever happen? Yes, in some cases it does, but why take a chance on something this vital to the foundation of a Christian home? Yes, you may have deep feelings for the unbeliever, but this issue, above all others, must be settled before the wedding ceremony. If you're praying that the person you want to marry becomes a Christian, see that prayer answered before you even agree to marry them. God never intended marriage to be an evangelism tool.

**2. Inspect the Baggage.** Another element necessary to prepare for marriage is to realize that whether we admit it or not, we all bring "baggage" into a relationship. Our baggage usually consists of past experiences, negative memories, fears, or other issues. This baggage is rarely shared with our partners, and can eventually become the source of great pain and conflict. All baggage should be opened, inspected, and thoroughly examined before the marriage takes place. Do you know of any baggage that you are bringing, or have brought, into your marriage?

**3. Settle the "Leave and Cleave" Issue.** *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24) In the historical and cultural setting of the Old Testament, it was an understood fact that the woman would leave her parents' home to go live with her husband, so the wording here only includes a directive to the male. But today, in order to establish a healthy marriage, both partners must understand and follow those clear instructions from God's Word. What does this mean today?

**First, Both Partners must Be Willing to Leave.** Each partner must leave the "I" life to take on the "we" life. Leaving involves two kinds of surgery:

- **Severing the cord of dependency:** This means choosing not to rely on your parents for material or emotional support.
- **Severing the cord of allegiance:** Before the wedding day, your most significant relationships are with your mother and father, but during that ceremony your priorities change. You should continue to honor your

parents (Exodus 20:12), but your priority must now become your spouse. Your first and foremost loyalty is to your spouse.

What are some common ways that individuals fail to cut the cord of dependence after they are married?

**Second, Both Partners must Cleave to Each Other.** The word “cleave” means to lean toward, or be joined to your partner. To cleave to your marriage partner “means to choose your spouse above others, even yourself. You cleave, lean toward, or join to your partner by meeting their needs, hearing their words, understanding their feelings, and desires. **You cleave to each other alone for physical fulfillment and enjoyment.**

**4. Take Your Time.** The fourth step in preparing for marriage is to make sure you have spent enough time in preparation. As Shakespeare wrote in King Henry, “A hasty marriage seldom proveth well.” It takes time to know another person well enough to decide to spend your life with them. Proverbs 21:5 says it well, “The plans of the diligent and informed will lead to abundance, but everyone who is hasty will only come to want and ruin.” A wedding is a one-day event, but a marriage is a lifetime commitment. Take the time necessary to learn everything you can about the person with whom you plan to spend a lifetime.

The couple should focus on two key areas when taking their time:

- A. Get to Know the Other Person’s Family.
- B. Get to Know as Much as Possible about Him/her.

**5. Establish a “Covenant” Marriage.** Think about what a covenant, a promise, or a vow means to God. Read the following texts: Deuteronomy 23:21, 23.

#### 6. Seek Biblically-based Premarital Counseling.

1. **Verbal communication**, that is, the use of words.
2. **Nonverbal body language.** We give each other non-verbal cues in relationships all the time. These may include posture, gestures, eye movement, or facial expressions.

Families Usually Exhibit One of Three Communication Styles:

1. **Aggressive Communicators.** This family communicates by being rude to one another. They are bossy overbearing people, and the words they use are selfish, accusing, and often volatile. Physical aggression may even be a characteristic of this nonfunctional family. Some members of the family never express their opinions out of fear of retaliation.
2. **Passive Communicators.** Communication is strained and rare in this family. Family members may be too shy or quiet and are often fearful of confrontation. Most often, there is apathy to the point that family members ignore each other or don't care to communicate with one another.
3. **Assertive Communicators.** This family makes communication a priority. Family members are free to express opinions and ideas. They are calm, confident, and want to understand what others are saying and meaning. They listen and respond to each other in appropriate ways. Each family member strives to respect the feelings and thoughts of the others.

#### Learning to Listen

The most overlooked skill in communication is the art of listening. Successful families have learned that communication only works when members learn to listen to each other. You've probably heard the adage, "God gave us two ears and one mouth, so He intended us to listen twice as much as we talk!" It's a good point. Most people only listen in order to answer, attack, or defend. In fact, families are made up of basically four types of listeners.

## IV. NOURISHING THE FAMILY

There are two basic avenues for communication.

1. **The Judge.** The judge is the person in the family who believes they are always right. Their mind is already made up, so they see no benefit in listening to others. This person is usually negative and critical. They voice their opinion instead of listening. Psalm 115:6 refers to this type of person. Complete the following verse. "They have ears, but they do not hear."
2. **The Counselor.** The counselor listens only long enough to make a quick assessment and move on. This person is preoccupied with evaluating and offering advice that is usually not asked for. They accuse others of not listening. They only listen in order to dictate and tell others what should be done. Proverb 18:13 refers to this person: *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*
3. **The Inquisitor.** This person believes the way to listen is to constantly shoot questions at the other person or persons - something which can be tiresome and counterproductive. The inquisitor is prone to interrupt and is easily distracted. Asking questions in order to clarify understanding is important, but the inquisitor overdoes this tactic.
4. **The Good Listener.** By far, the most effective listener in the family is the person who listens not only to the words being said, but who also tries to understand the feelings of the person-speaking. The listener pays close attention to body language, nonverbal signs, and facial expressions. The good listener is not judgmental of what is being said or how it is being expressed. The good listener's desire is to understand and respond accordingly.

According to James 1:19, we should be quick to listen, and slow to speak, slow to anger.

## V. STRENGTHENING INTIMACY

**Outdo one another in showing honor.** – Romans 12:10 NRSV

It should come as no surprise that because men and women are different, their emotional needs are going to be different. The key words are, "emotional needs." All humans have common needs. However, husbands and wives also have differing emotional needs.

### The Five Basic Emotional Needs of Women

1. **A Woman Needs Her Husband's Affection.** She needs to be regarded as valuable, important, and worthy. The most romantic things a husband can do are those things that demonstrate how precious his wife is to him. In fact, that's how a woman would define "romance." Romantic moments, as well as romantic acts, are those designed to make a woman feel especially treasured and loved. – It's the little things that count!
2. **A Woman Needs Conversation.** Women connect at the emotional level through verbal communication. When she knows the facts and has all the details, a woman feels more secure. A woman needs specific words from her husband: words of affirmation, love, and encouragement that only a husband should provide. Her self-esteem and security are intact when she hears her husband express how he feels about her.
3. **A Woman Needs Honesty and Openness.** Neither men nor women want a spouse who can't be trusted; but for a woman it's imperative that she be able to trust her husband. A woman needs her husband to be a man of his word, respected in the community, and known as an honest, forthright man who will do what he says he will do. A woman needs to be able to depend on her husband to keep his word, and she becomes heartbroken if she discovers that her husband has been deceitful in any way. Another area in which a woman needs honesty is regarding a man's feelings and his innermost thoughts.
4. **A Woman Needs Financial Stability (or Support).** To her, financial stability means that her household will be clothed, fed, housed, and cared for. It's important to note that a woman doesn't need wealth or abundance in the form of new cars, the

finest clothes, or the most expensive home. What she needs is the feeling of safety that comes when her family's basic needs are met. 1 Timothy 5:8 labels a man who does not provide for his family as "worse than an infidel." When a husband meets his wife's need as a provider of financial stability, the wife has her own responsibility. She mustn't overspend or apply undue pressure on her husband for more than they can afford. She must be a partner in trimming costs and watching the budget.

**5. A Woman Needs a Man's Commitment to the Family.** A woman needs to know the family is her husband's first priority. She needs her husband to demonstrate his commitment to the family by making time for his family. Too many husbands seem to be more committed to their careers, friends, sports interests, or hobbies because those are the interests that consume their attention and time, and the family gets what is left – which is often very little. There's an old adage that is very appropriate: Love is spelled T-I-M-E. Fathers, your children will have many friends in their lifetime; they will have many teachers and others who will care for them. But absolutely no one can be your child's father but you.

#### The Five Basic Needs of Men

**1. A Man Needs Sexual Fulfillment.** It should surprise no one when we suggest that men are more sexually oriented than women. Women will often offer sex in order to receive intimacy (remember her need is to be treated as something precious), and men will feign intimacy in order to get sex. Many women dread the sexual encounter and avoid it, using excuse after excuse to postpone it. Of course, this attitude doesn't go unnoticed by the man. He begins to take it personally and his ego suffers. His wife's disinterest may make him feel undesirable. When his sexual needs are finally met, he often feels like he has forced himself upon his wife, and the experience leaves him frustrated and less than satisfied. For some women, sexual intercourse may not be pleasurable because of physical reasons. Certainly a physician can help you determine the cause and the treatment in those cases.

Don't go on for years without seeking help in this important area of intimacy.

- 2. A Man Needs a Wife Who Will Be His Playmate (Or Recreational Companionship).** It's not uncommon for women, when they are single, to join men in pursuing their interests. They find themselves hunting, fishing, playing football and watching movies they would never have chosen on their own. After marriage, wives try to interest their husbands in activities more to their liking. If their attempts fail, they may encourage their husbands to continue their recreational activities without them.
- 3. A Man Needs a Wife Who Cares about Herself (or an Attractive Spouse).** A man doesn't need a wife with a perfect figure or the most beautiful face. But a man does need a wife who cares about herself – the way she looks, her clothes, and her personal habits. In other words, it is important to him that his wife strives to be as attractive as she can be.
- 4. A Man Needs a Peaceful Home (or Domestic Support).** The peaceful home is sometimes noisy with the happy chatter of children. There might even be clutter in the entryway or on the stairs. The peaceful home can be made up of children, teenagers, and parents who have problems, but they are not out of control. There is a calm center, a focus. God rules this home, and it is bathed in love and prayer. Proverb 21:19 states it is better to live in the wilderness than with an angry, complaining woman. According to Proverb 27:15, a woman who is continually whining and complaining is like a continual dripping.
- 5. A Man Needs Admiration and Respect.** A man would rather be admired than loved. What do we mean? When a man is admired, he feels loved. That is the language of love for the male, words of affirmation and admiration. Specifically, the man needs his wife's admiration and respect. He may or may not have admiration from his boss, fellow employees, or other family members. He may be in a thankless job where there is little praise or recognition. Yet when he has a loving wife who bolsters his self-esteem by

finding things about him to admire, he feels successful (Ephesians 5:33). When the need for admiration is not met in the home, a young man will seek it outside the home — from gangs, unwholesome relationships, or any other source that will help satisfy that need.

### Parents Meet the Needs of Their Children

1. **Children Need Unconditional Love.** We need to teach our children the principle of these words: *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 NKJV)*
2. **Children Need to Be Trained.** *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverb 22:6)* Parents must realize that with children more is caught than is taught.
3. **Children Need to Be Nurtured.** The word "nurture" means "to provide nourishment and support during the fragile stages of development." It is imperative that parents provide this nurture with words, with touch, and with their time.
4. **Children Need Genuine, Deserved Praise.**
5. **Children Need Parents Who Are in Control.**

## VI. PROTECTING INTIMACY

**A. KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT.** *Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. (Ephesians 4:26 NRSV)* All relationships have the potential for conflict. Conflict is a normal, natural part of life. As strange as it may seem, a life void of conflict is not healthy. Just remember this important principle: **Not All Conflict Is Bad!**

There are four possible responses to conflict.

1. I win; you lose.
2. You win; I lose.

3. We both lose, and no one wins.
4. Everyone wins, and no one loses.

Your goal should be that everyone wins and no one loses.

### Principles Of Constructive Conflict Resolution

1. **Practice The Prevention Rule.** *"The beginning of strife is like the letting of water. Stop the flow before it starts. Quit before the quarrel breaks out." – Proverb 17:14.* Once begun, the evolution of the conflict is incredibly hard to shut down.
2. **Look For Areas Where You Are To Blame.** When you look for your responsibility in the conflict, it causes the other party to soften and often come to your defense. Ask yourselves these questions:
  - a. Is it a Worthy Battle? Proverb 19:11
  - b. Am I Wrong?
  - c. Should I React or Respond?
  - d. What Difference Is this Going to Make in My Life in Three Days? What Impact Will it Have in Five Years?

Here are a few suggestions as to how to say things more effectively to one another.

- **Use the Still, Small Voice.** (1 Kings 19:12). Lower your voice. Take a deep breath and speak in measured tones. If you're in a rage, step away and calm down. Watch your body language and eye contact. A certain demeaning toss of the head or look in the eye can make the hearer angry and defensive.
- **Maintain Your Sense of Humor.**
- **Don't Get Personal.** Don't say irresponsible things about each other with the intent to hurt and demean. That's attacking the person, not the issue at hand.
- **Don't Bring up the Past.**
- **Don't Get off the Subject.**

**B. LEARN TO FORGIVE.** *If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:15 NRSV)*

### What Forgiveness Is

1. **Being aware of what someone has done and still forgiving them.** Forgiveness is achieved

only when we acknowledge what was done without any denial or covering up – and still refuse to make the offender pay for their crime. Forgiveness is often painful. It hurts to kiss revenge good-bye. Forgiveness is not forgetting what the other person did. Forgiveness is no longer holding that person accountable for the transgression.

- 2. Choosing to keep no record of wrong.** Love “keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Why do we keep track of the times we are offended? To use them. To prove what happened. To wave them before someone who doubts what actually happened. Love is a choice. Forgiveness is a choice. When we develop a lifestyle of forgiveness, we learn to erase the wrong rather than file it away in our mental computer.
- 3. Refusing to punish.** Refusing to punish those who deserve it – giving up the natural desire to see them “get what’s coming to them.” It is refusing to cave in to the fear that this person or those people won’t get the punishment or rebuke we think they deserve.
- 4. Not telling what they did.** Anyone who truly forgives does not gossip about their offender. If you must tell someone, make sure that person is trustworthy and will never repeat your situation to those it does not concern.
- 5. Being merciful.** “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7). One difference between grace and mercy is that grace is getting what we don’t deserve, and mercy is not getting what we do deserve. So, when we show mercy we are withholding justice from those who have injured us, and that is one aspect of godliness.
- 6. Forgiveness involves letting go.** Remember playing tug-of-war as a child? As long as the parties on each end of the rope are tugging, you have a “war.” But when someone lets go, the war is over.

## VII. A FUTURE TOGETHER

Establish Positive Memories and Traditions.

**2 Thessalonians 2:15.** Traditions achieve three results in successful families.

- 1. Traditions Bring a Family Together, Causing the Members to Know One Another Better.** Traditions will establish themselves if you simply allow yourself to be a part of your family. When you least expect it, a tradition will emerge with a great memory on its heels.
- 2. Traditions Create Positive Memories Which Can Provide Encouragement and Stability.** Traditions are memories of memories. The memories which accompany our traditions can have a powerful impact. As recorded in Psalm 137:1, while the children of Israel were in captivity, what was their response regarding their memories?
- 3. Traditions Are Cherished and Passed along to Future Generations.** Cherished traditions and memories give our families a sense of who they are, from whence they came, and where they are going.

## PRAYER

As Important as a Spiritual Foundation is, we need to bathe our home in constant prayer. These two are related, like two bookends.

“His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression.”<sup>2</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As you build your own home, which of these ingredients will you include? What other ingredients will you include besides the ones mentioned? Each home is different; therefore, your home does not have to have all these same ingredients. At the same time, some of these

are indispensable. A home without a solid foundation will fall. A home without protective boundaries (walls) is vulnerable. A home without proper shelter (roof) will be open to damage from climate changes. A home without heat (prayer) may cause illness and eventual death. These are indispensable.

Other elements of a healthy home are very important, but may change from time to time depending on your current circumstances. If you don't have children, meeting the needs of your children is not necessary. Your own emotional needs and those of your spouse may differ and may not be the ones listed as typical

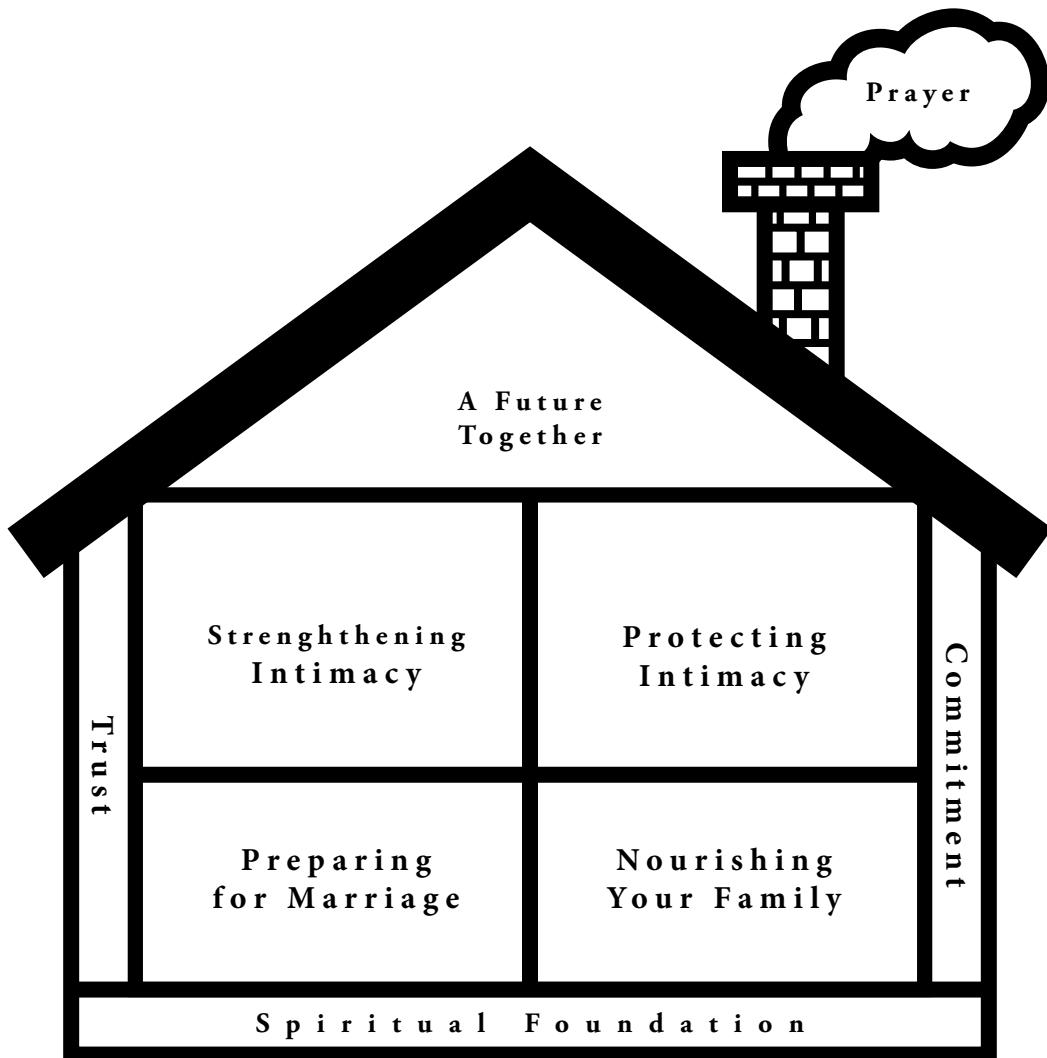
to most men or most women. Therefore, you need to think about which are your most important needs and which are your spouse's most important needs and then aim to meet each other's emotional needs.

The most important consideration is to think carefully about how you are or will be building a healthy home. "Count the cost" (Luke 14:28-30).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thatcher, F. and H. The Long-term Marriage. World Books (1980)

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p.156





2017  
PLANBOOK



REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

# GROWING DISCIPLES

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



## The Text

**NO LONGER DO I CALL YOU SERVANTS,  
FOR A SERVANT DOES NOT KNOW WHAT  
HIS MASTER IS DOING; BUT I HAVE  
CALLED YOU FRIENDS...**

**JOHN 15:15**

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## ICEBREAKER GROUP DISCUSSION

### 1. Remember

- Who was your best childhood friend? What made them so?
- Are they still your friends?
- What keeps your friendship intact, healthy, and strong?

### 2. Review

- Read the entire section of John 15:1-17. How are verses 9 and 12 related to one another?
- How is love the essential dynamic of the Christian life?
- How does our relationship with Jesus change once we understand and start practicing the principle of verse 13?

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### 3. Reflect

- Do you feel more like Jesus' servant or His friend?
  - What might help you to develop a closer friendship with Jesus?
  - What would He have to do?
  - What would you have to do?
- 

## Overview

Our scriptural text reminds us that Jesus Himself calls us His friends. Think about what that means. Merriam-Webster (2013) defines a friend as "a person who you like and enjoy being with". Think about that definition in terms of being friends with Jesus. According to the definition, if you are to call Jesus your friend then that means that you must firstly "like" Him and secondly "enjoy being with" Him. The only way that will occur is by spending time with Him.

When we first meet someone we do not call them friends but acquaintances. It is only as we spend time together that a friendship develops. In John 15, Jesus describes Himself as "The Vine". Friendship is like the attachment that exists between The Vine and the branches. It is strengthened and nourished by time.

As we discuss the importance of introducing our children to a forever friendship with Jesus we will consider the following:

# A Forever Friendship

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

- Modeling
- Family Worship
- Sabbath School, Church Attendance, and Sabbath Afternoons
- Daily Activities
- Benefits to Your Child of a Forever Friendship with Jesus

## Modeling

Perhaps you have heard the old adage, “Do as I say—not as I do”. We cannot expect our children to do what we are not doing. Instead, the old adage, “actions speak louder than words” seems to make a lot more sense. This has never been more true than in the area of parenting. Even very young children mimic what they see. They are the best reflectors of what they are exposed to. So, as we consider the topic of introducing our children to Jesus as their best friend, we must first look in the mirror.

Would your child say that Jesus is your best friend? What would make them answer the way they would? Do you speak of Jesus often in your home? Is He given a place of priority in your family schedule? Is He included in your family celebrations?

## GROUP ACTIVITY

Answer each question individually and then share your responses with the group.

1. If you could be a personal friend with anyone in the world who would that person be? Why?
2. What is the difference between knowing about someone and knowing them?
3. Do your friendships reflect your values? If so, in what ways?

If you want Jesus to be your child’s best friend then He must first be your best friend. This must be evidenced in all that you do. Jesus must be central to all that you do as a family.

Your child must know that Jesus is a treasured family member in the same way as grandma or grandpa. They will hold Jesus in the same place of priority in the family as the one you give to Him.

## Family Worship

Your family priorities are reflected in the way you spend your family time. What place does Jesus have in your home? Is the sum total contained in the few hours that you spend as a family in church each week? Or, is He a part of everyday activities?

As a family, you may readily recognize the value of proper nutrition, water, sunlight, rest, and other daily activities. Your bodies need those things in order to be healthy. In the same way you also need spiritual nourishment. Your family is nourished spiritually only through time spent with Jesus. He must be central to all that is done in your home.

Family worship should be a part of every day. It should be every day at a regular time. Be consistent and do not allow the busyness of your daily life to push it aside. Remember, it should not be hours in length. The point is to make sure that worship activities are age-appropriate for your child. A half hour of reading from the book of Revelation in the Bible may not be especially appealing to a two-year-old. Instead, try reading a short story from their favorite Bible storybook; play a Bible game; put a Bible puzzle together and talk about the story as you help your child put the puzzle pieces in place. Spend time in nature by collecting colorful leaves or bird watching and talk to your child about God as the Creator. These types of age-appropriate activities make family worship something your child will look forward to. Make it varied to keep it interesting. Have it indoors one day and outdoors the next when weather permits. Involve them in the planning when they are older, you may be amazed at what they will come up with.

As a parent, do you want your child to grow up to be an active member in your church? If so, consider this research. Benson and Eklund (1990) discovered that children who are most

likely to mature in faith are those raised in homes where faith is part of the normal ebb and flow of family life. Religious practices in the home virtually double the probability of a child growing up to be an active member of the church. In other words, what happens in your home affects their involvement in the church when they grow to be adults. The “normal ebb and flow of family life” today will affect them tomorrow. They must see Jesus in your everyday life at home in order to care about church attendance as they grow to make decisions on their own. This means that time spent in daily family worship as a child will set the stage for adult behavior later on.

### Sabbath School, Church Attendance, and Sabbath Afternoons

Scripture calls the Sabbath “a delight” (Isaiah 58:13). Would your child call it the same? It is far too easy to fill the Sabbath with a list of “don’ts” and things that “are not allowed”. Instead, make it a delight that it was intended to be not just for your children, but for your entire family. All week talk about how you look forward to the Sabbath. Talk about the special meal, the family outing in nature, or the opportunity to see a beloved friend again. Your attitude about the Sabbath will be contagious. If the day is a delight for you then it will also become a delight for your child. On the other hand, if you speak negatively about the day, so will your child.

**IF YOU TURN AWAY YOUR FOOT FROM THE SABBATH, FROM DOING YOUR PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY, AND CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY DAY OF THE LORD HONORABLE, AND SHALL HONOR HIM, NOT DOING YOUR OWN WAYS, NOR FINDING YOUR OWN PLEASURE, NOR SPEAKING YOUR OWN WORDS, THEN YOU SHALL DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD; AND I WILL CAUSE YOU TO RIDE ON THE HIGH HILLS OF THE EARTH, AND FEED YOU WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB YOUR FATHER. THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HAS SPOKEN.**

**ISAIAH. 58:13-14**

It may be very tempting to stay at home on Sabbath instead of going to church. Maybe it has been a tough week at work and you would relish the idea of sleeping in a few extra hours or lounging around the house all day. Have you noticed how Satan does everything possible on Sabbath mornings to create havoc in your home? The bathtub overflows, the toast burns, the dress shoes need polishing, and your little girl’s Sabbath dress is ripped. Oh, it is so tempting to stay at home! The extra effort of getting little ones up, fed, and dressed in nice clothes is exhausting before you even walk out of the door.

But, creating a habit of church attendance is important in raising godly children. A habit formed in childhood is often continued into adulthood. As a result, if a child attends church regularly, they will likely continue to attend when they grow older. You cannot expect teenagers to want to go to church if they have never developed a love for it as toddlers. Remember, your parenting efforts are not only for today’s challenges. Rather, you are training your children for tomorrow’s decisions also.

Perhaps one of a child’s favorite things about Sabbath is going to Sabbath School. It is there that they can sing the songs that appeal to them, listen to Bible stories told in age appropriate ways, ring the bells, and play with the colorful felt pieces. It also gives children the opportunity to socialize with a peer group that shares their family faith values. Now, this also means leaving the home even earlier than if you were only going to attend the worship service and listening to the sermon. But, put yourself in your child’s shoes when you are tempted to do this. In so doing your child would be missing out on perhaps one of the best parts of the day. If you were a toddler, wouldn’t you want to be in Sabbath School? That’s where the fun is!

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

Don’t forget that the Sabbath day does not end with the benediction after the church

service. You still have half of the day left. And, even though your little one may need to nap in the afternoon, that still leaves several hours in the day to fill with appropriate Sabbath activities. That is a great time of the week to plan a special outing for the whole family. Fill every second of it with quality time to reconnect to God and to each other as family members. Ask your child for ideas. Allow their input in to how to spend the time. Keep a stack of special toys or games reserved only for the Sabbath hours. In this way those toys are special and not something that they get to play with every other day of the week. Purchase a special container and fill it with Bible puzzles, games, coloring books, Bible story books etc.

One way to make the Sabbath a delight is to plan special meals. In our home this was the one day of the week when we had a special dessert. We called it our “Sabbath Treat”. We also had special candles on the table, reserved for Sabbath that our little girls got to light on Friday evening as the sun was going down. And, that special container came out that was labeled, “Sabbath Toys”. Those simple things made the Sabbath a delight for our little girls. Instead of it being a day filled with a list of things they could not do, it was a day filled with special privileges reserved just for the Sabbath.

### GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Read the following texts: Genesis 2:1, Exodus 20:8-11, and Mark 2:27. What do you believe are the benefits God intended for us as we rest on the Sabbath?
  
2. List specific ways that the Sabbath can be made a delight for each member of your family.

### Daily Activities

Making Jesus our child’s best friend is not something that happens if we only go to church on Sabbath. In reality, this happens by being intentional every day of the week. It happens through the small things that we incorporate into our daily activities.

Prayer is one of those things. Yes, it means praying at mealtimes, even if we are in a family restaurant, but prayer also should happen at other times during the day. You can intentionally teach your child to take all matters to Jesus in prayer. For example, if your child is having trouble finding a favorite stuffed animal or blanket you can kneel with them and pray to Jesus to help them find it. Then when it is found you can take a moment to kneel with them again and offer a prayer of thanksgiving. You can pause at numerous times during their day to help them pray about their joys as well as their frustrations. Soon, it will become a habit for them to talk to Jesus on their own. It takes those few extra minutes but when it is a habit instilled in them you will know that every minute you spent was priceless and nothing else was of more importance.

Keep an open eye for those “teachable moments” that will occur unexpectedly during your normal daily routine. When you are stuck in a traffic jam and your child is in the car seat crying, start singing a song to Jesus that they are familiar with. When you see the first flower bloom in the spring time, take a moment and talk to your child about what it must have been like for Jesus on that third day of creation when He made all the beautiful colored flowers. Those moments fill our day and all you need to do is to ask God to point them out to you and to help you share them with your children.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

1. If you lived in Jesus’ time, what would you tell your children about Him?
  
2. What are your favorite stories about Jesus that would make Him real to your child?

### Benefits to Your Child of Having a Forever Friendship with Jesus

What are the benefits of making Jesus your child’s forever friend? Studies show the beneficial consequences of religious belief and practice on physical and mental health and on relationships.

It appears that one of the most important things parents can do for their children is to have a Christ-centered home (Dollahite and Thatcher, p. 10). A growing body of empirical research demonstrates that a family's religious involvement directly benefits children in a variety of very significant ways.

In their survey of the research literature, David Dollahite and Jennifer Thatcher (2005) found the following benefits of a family's religious involvement:

- Divorce rates are lower and marital satisfaction and quality scores highest among religiously involved couples.
- Religious practices are linked with family satisfaction, closer father-child relationships, and closer parent-child relationships.
- There is less domestic violence among more religious couples, and religious parents are less likely to abuse or yell at their children.
- Religious involvement promotes involved and responsible fathering and is associated with more involved mothering.
- Greater religiosity in parents and youth is inversely related with many high-risk behaviors, all of which have potential to greatly influence current and future family relationships.

Yes, Jesus wants a forever friendship with you and with your child. The benefits to your child are numerous. Here are some ways a forever friendship with Jesus will benefit your child:

**1. It promotes their eternal happiness.**

When your child has Jesus as their friend, they will discover joy in Jesus Christ. They will understand that true lasting happiness is not in all the "stuff" the world has to offer but in knowing Jesus.

**2. It helps them make sense out of life.** Your child will come to understand that God is the Creator, how sin entered the world, God's gift of salvation, and will look forward to their heavenly home that waits.

**3. It's their best chance to accept Christ.**

Research has proven that children tend to be more receptive to the gospel than any other age group. Take advantage of those young years to introduce your little ones to Jesus.

**4. It can help counter balance worldly influences.** Children need positive influences to counter-balance the negative influences in this secularized world. A friendship with Jesus helps them focus on the spiritual rather than the secular.

**5. It can help them learn to love others.** The second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor. We must teach them this truth till it becomes a way of life, because it doesn't come naturally. A love for Jesus flows out to others.

**6. It is something fun to do.** Do you know who invented fun? God did. Do you know why? For His own glory. While entertainment and fun-seeking activities can become an idol, we should not think God is against fun. Being friends with Jesus is fun and it is your responsibility as a parent to focus on the joy of service, the beauty in nature, and the happiness that comes from knowing Jesus.

**7. It helps them with their relationships/friendships.** Exposing your child to those who share your family's faith values will assist them in their choice of friends. This is a key benefit to your child as you have the opportunity to guide them in establishing positive relationships.

**8. It gives children special memories.** Think back to when you were a child. Can you remember a special Sabbath School teacher or other church related event? Things like crafts made in Vacation Bible School and songs learned in Sabbath School can become a lasting memory. Or, perhaps it is a favorite family worship activity or the way that you said family prayers. When Jesus is your child's best friend you expose them to many memory-making opportunities.

**9. It allows them to make friends with adult volunteers in a safe environment.** In our culture child safety is a constant concern, and rightly so. But there is still great value in kids relating with trusted adults. Your practices as a family will expose them to adults in significant roles such as a pastor, Sabbath School teacher, or other family friend.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How long has been your longest friendship? What has kept you as friends for that long?
  
2. Has somebody else ever tried to come between you and your friend? What did you do to prevent that from happening?
  
3. What can you apply from your earthly friendships to your friendship with Jesus? What can you teach your children?
  
4. Think about some of the friendships mentioned in the Bible (Ruth/Naomi; David/Jonathan; Paul/Barnabas; David/ Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah). What can you learn from them? What do they have in common?

## Wrap Up

A forever friendship with Jesus for your child actually begins with you. Take some time for self-reflection. Would your child say that Jesus is your best friend?

Daily family worship may seem like another thing to add to an already over-scheduled day. Consider ways that you can enhance the experience for your family and make it something the children eagerly anticipate during the whole day.

Attendance to Sabbath School and church on a regular basis is important to the spiritual health of the entire family. Sabbath afternoons are a special time to enjoy each others' company and to connect with Jesus.

Common daily activities provide numerous opportunities to teach your child about Jesus. As a parent you need to be open and intentional in seeking those moments without fail. Ultimately, by having a forever relationship with Jesus Christ, your child will experience benefits that will last a lifetime and carry them through eternity.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the statement below. How does it speak to you, as a parent, about leading your child to a forever friendship with Jesus Christ?

**THE WORK OF EDUCATION IN THE HOME,  
IF IT IS TO ACCOMPLISH ALL THAT GOD  
DESIGNS IT SHALL, DEMANDS THAT PARENTS  
BE DILIGENT STUDENTS OF THE SCRIPTURES.  
THEY MUST BE LEARNERS OF THE GREAT  
TEACHER. DAY BY DAY THE LAW OF LOVE  
AND KINDNESS MUST BE UPON THEIR LIPS.  
THEIR LIVES MUST REVEAL THE GRACE AND  
TRUTH THAT WAS SEEN IN THE LIFE OF  
THEIR EXAMPLE. THEN A SANCTIFIED LOVE  
WILL BIND THE HEARTS OF PARENTS AND  
CHILDREN TOGETHER, AND THE YOUTH  
WILL GROW UP ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH  
AND ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN THE  
LOVE OF GOD.**

WHITE, CHILD GUIDANCE, p. 66

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## GROUP ACTIVITY

List some specific ways that you can help your child develop a “forever friendship” with Jesus.

## Try this at Home

Here are some things to try at home this week:

1. Remember to continue the “Bible Promise Project” we started in chapter one. Find a promise in the Bible that you can apply to helping your child have a forever friendship with Jesus. Write it out on an index card and put it in a prominent place in your home where you can see it throughout the day. Repeat it often, memorize it, and claim it as your own. And, remember to share it the next time you meet with your group members.
  
2. Begin putting together some toys, games etc. that will be reserved just for the Sabbath. Label it “My Sabbath Bag” and fill it with various age appropriate items. Remember, if you allow your child to play with it during the week you will defeat the purpose.

3. If you are not having family worship start today. Keep it at a consistent time every day, keep it short, and remember to make the worship activity age appropriate, enjoyable, and exciting for your child.
4. Look for those “teachable moments” this week and use them as opportunities to talk about Jesus.

### A Prayer You May Say

Dear Lord, I want my child to have a forever friendship with You. I know that it starts with me. Help me to reflect You to my child. Help me to be faithful in being a positive Christian role model. Help me to be a spiritual leader in my home in the areas of daily family worship and prayer. Help me to be faithful in church attendance. May words of praise and love to You be spoken so often in my home that it reflects that You are a precious part of our family circle. And, help my child to see You as their very best friend. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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# Family Leadership Through Submission

DAVID AND BEVERLY SEDLACEK

The topic of submission is hard to address in families, even for many Christian families today. Perhaps nothing goes so strongly against our carnal human nature as to submit to another. And yet the experience of submission is that which will carry us through the remarkable events which are so soon to come. Satan has masterfully created different challenges to true Biblical submission in various parts of the world. In some cultures, submission implies total, unquestioning obedience of children, regardless of age, to their parents, and wives to their husbands. Anything short of full, immediate obedience could result in physical punishment for either children or women. In other places, there is too little respect for parental authority or spousal position. Both extremes (dominating subjection or permissive rebellion) are at odds with Biblical submission. Paul warns us about this in his letter when he says, "In the last days, people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving" (2 Timothy 3:1-3). These attitudes and behaviors are evidence of a self-focus that is uncharacteristic of Biblical submission.

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Rebellion against God's law, originating in Lucifer's rebellion in Heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14) is the heritage of all of Adam's children whose hearts have not been regenerated by the indwelling spirit or character of God's love. Parents, as lawgivers in the family, stand in the place of God, The Lawgiver, and are to teach their children about the blessings of tranquility, order, and long life that is reaped when they keep the law. Parents teach their children about law not only by the rules they make but also by how they enforce these rules. When parents are inconsistent, children may take glee in "getting over on them." At the same time, children may be angry and disappointed that they were permitted to do so, and may judge their parents as being weak, gullible and easily manipulated. When parents are too harsh in administering discipline or do so in anger, children learn to comply out of fear. They don't internalize the love of law. Rather, fear of authority and rebellion against law are the seeds planted. If these seeds are not rooted out they will produce a harvest of rebellion against God.

Donna was a minister's daughter. Her father held such high standards for his daughters that they never felt able to please him. He did not trust his daughters and therefore made very rigid rules to control their behavior. Donna did her best to please her dad, but she feared him and resented the continual message that she was untrustworthy. On one occasion, when she dated a young man, innocent

circumstances resulted in her getting home one hour after curfew. Instead of inquiring if there were extenuating circumstances, her father immediately accused her of being a whore and severely beat her. Later in life, Donna herself accepted Jesus as her Savior and developed a strong walk of faith. However, she made it clear that she would submit to no man, not even her husband. Further, she insisted the Christian life was *only* a walk of faith, and that obedience to the law had nothing to do with godly living. She continually hurt herself by overeating and eating unhealthy foods. She refused to exercise, but claimed the blood of Jesus to heal her from elevated blood pressures, as high as 300/180 (the normal range being 120/80). She did not see that her rebellion against the law was rebelling against God, and was causing her to hurt herself in the process. The root of this rebellion was in her relationship with her father, and spilled over into her relationships with anyone in authority, including her husband. Suggesting to her that she needed to look at the law from a different point of view meant that we were challenging her love of God and her Christian walk. Through gentle, persistent, persuasion and prayer, she experienced healing in her relationship with her father, which enabled her to deal with the spiritual strongholds. Deep spiritual and physical healing were the results, as she learned to care for herself.

There is perhaps no greater wounding of the spirit of a person than when a father molests his child. When the father of the family, intended to be God's representative, violates a child in such an intimate way, the spiritual wounding that takes place makes it next to impossible for that person to trust. A profound sense of rage seethes within the child, which leads to rejection of the violator and all he stands for, or to an unholy attachment to him in an attempt to get his love. While we cannot fully explore the ramifications of sexual molestation here, suffice it to say that such individuals will have great difficulty submitting to any authority figure including God (regardless of their external profession of faith). Rhonda's father was an elder in the church. They belonged to a church that had very high standards, and he held his family to them meticulously. Yet, there was a secret in this family: Dad regularly molested each

of the six girls in the family, including Rhonda between the ages of four and fourteen. One day, he offered Rhonda to a deacon in the church who also sexually abused her. It is a wonder Rhonda and others like her have not totally rejected Christianity, to say nothing of the church in which they were raised. Individuals like Rhonda will not submit in their hearts to someone they cannot trust. They may obediently comply, but their obedience may not be true submission.

### Submission Defined

The question then arises, what is true submission? For the Christian, an examination of Christ's life and death on the cross provides a wonderful illustration. Christ embodied submission to God by taking upon himself human nature and the penalty of sin, thus freeing us from the power of sin: "So when He [Jesus] came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. Then I said, 'Here I am: I have come—it is written of me in the scroll of the book to do your will O God'" (Hebrews 10:5, 7 NET Bible). "I can do nothing on my own initiative. Just as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the one who sent me" (John 5:30, NET Bible). "But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent upon His power. So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day-by-day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will" (White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 208).

The embodiment of submission as a way of living is manifested in a willingness to be subject to another as Jesus was to His disciples when washing their feet. This embodiment reveals a spirit of humility and power that is born of meekness. Those who embody submission will inherit the new earth (Matthew 5:5).

In other words, submission is a principle of the heart, rooted in love for God and other humans, and is an expression of the indwelling presence of the life of Jesus. "He [God] made him who knew

no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians. 5:21). As a result of this amazing act, Christ has restored communion and fellowship with God to the human race and invites us to receive this power over sin. "We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:6). Once we submit to him and embrace His life, death, and resurrection, we become the means to invite others into this experience: "Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians. 5:20). Submission is an essential ingredient, as we embody the fullness of Christ's life in us.

There are several implications of the embodied Christ living out his submission in us. First, submission is continuous. We do not jump in and out of submission depending on the circumstance. This continual submission stands against Satan's seeds of rebellion he planted in the human heart. Submission always results in obedience when it is a response to a command of God. "The submission on our part must be proportionate to the gift of God; it must be complete and wanting in nothing. We are all debtors to God. He has claims upon us that we cannot meet without giving ourselves a full and willing sacrifice. He claims prompt and willing obedience, and nothing short of this will He accept" (White, *Counsels for the Church*, p. 188).

Second, submission does not always result in obedience when it comes to responding to the authority of other humans. Obedience is often an external, behavioral expression of submission. Therefore, it must be true that one can submit to rightful authority but not obey. Even though our obedience to other men is dependent upon their position of authority as assigned by God (parents, husbands, employers, church leadership) as well as the conformance of their command to the law of God, the Bible never sets such limits upon submission. It just states: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). "And

all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). It is, therefore, not only possible to submit even when you cannot obey, but it is required. A Biblical example of this is the three Hebrew boys as recorded in Daniel Chapter 3. King Nebuchadnezzar summoned all of the officials of the kingdom to the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon (Daniel 3:1-3). This command would not result in any violation God's law, and therefore, the three submitted to the command and obeyed. When the king commanded that everyone assembled bow down to the image he had erected, the three Hebrews in the assembly respectfully responded to the king ("May the king live forever," verse 9), thus honoring his authority. But, they politely refused to obey and were subsequently thrown into the fiery furnace. Thus, they demonstrated the embodiment of submission even as they refused to obey. Likewise, we are always required to submit to authority, even when we cannot obey.

Third, submission is between equals. God and Christ are equal in power and authority but Christ chose to submit to him for the task of saving humanity. Likewise, in the marriage relationship, the principle of mutual submission is based on shared authority. "The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife" (I Corinthians. 7:4). Eve's formation from Adam's side (Genesis 2: 4) is evidence of the equality of man and woman. Man's Biblical headship is descriptive of life in a fallen world, but not prescriptive of the way of life God intended.

Fourth, if submission is between two equals, it must be freely given, not forced. Children, spouses, and others under the control of others can be treated in such a domineering way that they will comply with a command obediently, but not embody submission in their hearts. God instead draws us into obedience through his self-sacrificing love (John 12:32). Jesus also said: "You are my friends if you do the things I command you" (John 15:14). Rather than

commanding obedience as he has the right to do, God invites obedience from the position of one friend to another. The position of humility assumed by God invites the human heart's submission.

Fifth, submission is learned. Looking at the experience of Jesus, Hebrews 5:8 reads: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through the things he suffered." In the Greek, the word for obedience is "hupakoe" (Strong's, 1890. 5218) which also translates as submission. Likewise, "He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death; even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). What are the implications of these impactful verses? First, Jesus learned submission through suffering, just as we must to prepare us for the time of trouble ahead. Secondly, who did Jesus submit to in becoming obedient to death on the cross? Was it His Father that Jesus submitted to as a part of working out the plan of salvation? The Father and the Son were in agreement about Jesus' sacrifice of His life on the cross (see John 10:17-18). Through the Jews' actions, Satan killed Jesus on the cross. Jewish law required stoning for blasphemy, which was the charge against Jesus. Jesus could have insisted on stoning, but the hatred of the Jews was so great that they were willing to violate the very law they claimed to uphold by demanding the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus said of the Jews: "You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not uphold the truth" (John 8:44). It was Satan working through the Jews who murdered Christ. In becoming obedient to death on the cross, Jesus submitted to be killed; he submitted in this sense to the Jews and Satan. He did not submit to them because they were right, but because He knew that it was through submission to the evil that they purposed to perform that He would triumph over sin. This principle of victory through submission is one that every Christian must have written on the tablets of his heart especially in the days to come.

Lest some misunderstand our message, we are emphatically saying that Jesus *did* not obey Satan's commands, nor become a toy in his hands. He voluntarily chose to place himself under Satan's power so that He could

obtain the victory for us. In the temptation in the wilderness, twice Jesus permitted Satan to carry Him bodily away. "Then the devil took Him into the holy city, and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple." "Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain" (Matthew 4:5,8). Jesus won the victory by allowing Satan to tempt Him. True submission is always an active process, never a passive one. To submit does not mean to be a doormat, passively "taking" whatever abuse another wishes to dish out. It is an active, strong, voluntary act of the will to place oneself under another for the good of all concerned.

How do these principles relate to the relationship between husbands and wives? Genesis 2 speaks to the relationship God intended for husbands and wives to enjoy with each other. The two individuals are to become one. In giving everything to each other, there is no selfishness, for they are giving to themselves. Giving everything combats selfishness. Ephesians 5:25 amplifies the call to submission: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it". As we have attempted to build a case that submission is mutual and also an embodiment of self-sacrificing love, we interpret this verse to mean that husbands might take a leadership position in the family in submitting to their wives. Love always seeks the good of the other and challenges the selfishness of the human heart. Husbands can take the lead in modeling submission in their families even as God did for fallen humanity by giving his life for us. Submission is a principle of life for all of us to live continually because it is a part of the essence of the life of God that dwells in us.

Ephesians 5:22 says: "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." Too often, this text has been interpreted to mean that wives are to be doormats, but this is not the case. From the pen of inspiration, we read: "A woman that will submit to be ever dictated to in the smallest matters of domestic life, who will yield up her identity, will never be of much use or blessing in the world, and will not answer the purpose of God in her existence. She is a mere machine to be guided

by another's will and another's mind. God has given each one, men and women, an identity, an individuality, that they must act in the fear of God for themselves" (White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 25). "When the wife yields her body and mind to the control of her husband, being passive to his will in all things, sacrificing her conscience, her dignity, and even her identity, she loses the opportunity of exerting that mighty influence for good which she should possess, to elevate her husband" (White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 127). Submission does not imply in any way a lack of equality or a lack of dignity. Submission is an attitude of the heart and an act of the will. It is not something forced from us. The submission of the wife does not mean that her husband has superior wisdom. It is an acknowledgment of his position in the Lord. That is, the position of the husband's headship as Paul states in the book of Ephesians 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church".

In other words, the woman's submission is motivated in a uniquely Christian way because the Lord wants it that way. Submission to the husband is submission to the Lord. The wife's attitude to her husband will always be submissive, but her obedience will not be unconditional. If asked to do something sinful, such as rob a bank, she would not do it. Her obedience is first to Christ, then to her husband. Anything else would be idolatrous. However, in most cases today, just the opposite problem exists. There is resistance to submission to our husbands. Jacinta came for counseling to get her life right with God. She was furious with her husband who was an addict and unfaithful to her. Their communication often happened with bitterness and contempt. She wanted to divorce him but was advised not to do so because he was pastor of a local church. So she had lived in misery for years but now had come to the end of her rope. She did not want to discuss reconciliation, but only getting her life right with God. In the process of helping her with her agenda, she saw how hardened her heart had become and how she contributed to creating the very thing she hated the most in the relationship. This revelation broke her

heart. She called him and acknowledged that she too had responsibility for the problems in their marriage. She apologized to him for her hardness of heart toward him. Several days later, her husband called to ask for help for his problem, broken by his wife's submissive attitude. Today they are shining examples of what a happy marriage is intended to be for Christians. They can talk over differences with a deep mutual love and respect. It is a joy for Jacinta to submit to her husband today. In this marriage, 1 Peter 3:1-2 has been illustrated: "In the same way you wives, be submissive to your own husbands; so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior". Nothing so much builds and reinforces a husband's sense of manhood as his wife's submissive respect.

What if there are legitimate differences between husband and wife regarding a course of action? After they have prayerfully sought the Lord's will together, listened carefully to one another, and discussed the situation, the final decision rests with the husband. What if it turns out that the man's decision was the wrong one? A wife who has learned to embody submission, who understands that the two of them are one, will not rub his face in his error nor expose him to others as the one responsible for the mistake, but will accept the consequences of the error as if she had made the decision. "Love not only bears with others' faults but cheerfully submits to whatever suffering or inconvenience such forbearance makes necessary. This love never faileth. It can never lose its value; it is an attribute of heaven" (White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 5*, p. 169.2) Submissive love is an attribute of heaven because self has died and the wife is operating on a heavenly plane. The gift of divinity has overshadowed her humanity. She is dead, and her life is hidden with Christ in God.

The Biblical principle of submission learned in families has far-reaching implications for God's people during the last days in which we are living. In addition to the foundational submission modeled in the lives of husbands

and wives, God enjoins children to submit to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3), employees to submit to their employers (1 Peter 2:18-21), the faithful to submit to church leadership (Hebrews 13:17) and all of us to submit to civil government (Romans 13:1-5; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; 1 Peter 2:13-16). While each of these injunctions is important, focus on submission to civil government is especially important to consider at the present time. More of our civil rights are being taken away. Very soon laws will be enacted taking away religious liberty and the faithful will be persecuted with economic boycott and ultimately a death decree (See Revelation Chapter 13). What will our attitude be during this coming time of persecution? Will we love our enemies? Will we continue to submit wherever possible except when a violation of God's law is at stake?

What were the attitudes of the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us when they were persecuted: the three Hebrew worthies, Daniel, John the Baptist, Stephen, the early Christian martyrs, the Waldenses, and especially Jesus Himself? Are we prepared to joyfully submit to the coming persecution regardless of the form it takes? Some of us will undoubtedly give our lives. Are we ready? Through all the trials which He has permitted in our lives, He has been attempting to prepare us for the days so soon to come. Without true submission, there will be no overcoming and no victory. "Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they will listen to you. They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me". "...the time is coming, when those who kill you will think they are

doing a holy service for God. This is because they have never known the Father, or me" John 15:20-21; 16:2-3 (NLT).

Knowing the Father and knowing Jesus means knowing their heart of love and their willingness to submit to our foolish rebellion even while trying to win us with their love. They have allowed themselves so often to be judged by their creatures, to be made the butt of jokes, and their name to be used lightly. God knows what it means to submit to evil because even in the hearts of many professed Christians He coexists with the evil of a heart that is not fully dead to its enmity against Him. Will we choose to learn to love God so supremely that we would rather die than expose Him to any further disgrace? God embodies submission. Will you allow Him to embody it in you and through you?

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In today's society the message seems clear in each instance. The generations seem to be arch enemies, constantly fighting against each other. There is no reconciliation, no unity, and no hope. There seems to be only a future of division, discontent, devastation and disaster. But is that the future God has planned for humanity? Is there any hope beyond our gloom and doom reality?

God has a message for these times. A time when it seems the generations are at odds. And He has called His church to present that message during the final scenes of earth's history. It is found in the prophetic appeal of the prophet Malachi, last voice of the Old Testament. He writes in Malachi 4:5,6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse".

It is a text often referenced and mentioned in sermons by many. But few address the heart of its message, "And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse". The Amplified Bible says, "And he shall turn and reconcile the hearts of the [estranged] fathers to the [ungodly] children, and the hearts of the [rebellious] children to their fathers [a reconciliation produced

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# The Elijah Message

TIMOTHY P. NIXON

by repentance of the ungodly], lest I come and smite the land with a curse and a ban of utter destruction". The Elijah message of Malachi 4:5,6 is a message of generational reconciliation. With the racial, cultural, gender, economic and national tensions that exist among us today, the Elijah message calls us to reconciliation in the home. A reconciliation initiated by the hearts of fathers turning toward their children and children toward their fathers. Notice it does not say mothers but fathers; and that the force turning their hearts comes from outside of them. "HE" shall turn and reconcile the hearts, the Amplified Bible says. We are incapable of doing it on our own. The power that causes us to turn toward each other must come from God. And the important element to this reconciliation is that the father initiates it. The elder turns to the younger.

The real key to the reconciliation called for in the Elijah message is the foundational principle of the kingdom of God. The one principle upon which all other principles rest. In order for generational reconciliation to take place, it requires mutual submission.

There is something very basic and fundamental about the existence of God that is often overlooked. When the Bible says in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God," the word that is used for God is "Elohim". In the Hebrew language the word "Elohim" is a collective or plural noun. So when the Bible introduces us to God in Genesis 1:1, the first thing we learn about the Deity is that God exists in community. And since each individual member

of the Godhead is deity, in order for them to exist in community requires “mutual submission”. They willingly submit and subordinate themselves to each other in an atmosphere of perfect love and harmony.

If you haven’t thought about it, the members of the Godhead elevate and uplift each other while placing themselves in a subordinate position. Jesus submits to the will of the Father. He says in John 5:30, “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me”. The Spirit uplifts the Son. In John 15:26 Jesus says, “even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”. The Father elevates Jesus. In Philippians 2:9-11 it says, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow... And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father”. Jesus exalts the Spirit above himself in Matthew 12:33 when he declares, “And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, neither in the world to come”. And finally, the Son magnifies the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:28 says, “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all”.

In order for the mutual submission of the Godhead to function, each member must give up their rights, their personal prerogatives so that harmony, unity and community can exist among them. Particularity and personal freedom has no place among them, though as God, they have every right to exercise their individual divinity. Isaiah 9:6 says Jesus is “The everlasting Father”, yet in the Godhead, He chooses to be the Son.

Mutual submission is a concept that we discuss and is a part of every aspect of the Christian experience. It is central to our understanding of the “Body of Christ”. It is the key principle that distinguishes “Christian Marriages”, from secular ones. It is the basis upon which the principle of servant leadership is founded and yet it is rarely practiced in the Christian community.

Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one

another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another”. “One another” is a phrase of mutuality, mutual submission and mutual love. He then continues, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”. Again, Jesus uses the phrase, “one to another”. It is a phrase of mutuality. But how can we be sure Jesus means mutual submission? He explains further in John 15:12 & 13, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you”. Here Jesus is explaining to us the quality of the mutuality. It is the kind of mutual submission that He exemplified. And lest we become confused He makes it crystal clear in the next verse, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”.

The Elijah message calls us to a higher quality of living in the community of faith that begins with generational reconciliation. That generational reconciliation can only be accomplished through mutual submission. A submission initiated by the elder toward the younger. It means giving up my rights and freedoms for a higher good, the greater good of community and unity. And when we are united generationally, we more fully reflect the character of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, a Godhead that exists in a loving relationship of mutual submission.

The Apostle Paul sets before the Christian community an ethic of living that says because Christ died for all, those who live no longer live for themselves, 2 Corinthians 5:14,15. He uses this premise to establish a higher principle of decision-making that all Christians must exercise. Whatever you believe your personal rights are, or however right you believe yourself to be, Paul gives this caution. He says in 1 Corinthians 8:9, 12 (TNIV) “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak”. He goes on to say, “When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ”. As Christians when we make decisions, the higher good is to place the other before the self. The harmony and well-being of the community is the higher good, not my personal rights and freedoms, even if those personal rights are not in and of themselves a sin. When we ignore how exercising our personal rights may affect someone in the community of faith and weaken them in their Christian walk, our actions become a sin against Christ. In other

words the unity of the community is greater than the individual and to ignore that principle in my decision-making is a sin. Paul's dictum can only be understood and appreciated when we understand the essential importance of mutual submission in the Christian experience. That is, to prefer others ahead of ones self. And in this instance Paul, as the elder, submits to the younger.

I have often been amazed at how little concern we have today in the church with how our decisions and actions effect those around us. Simply because the Bible gives no clear prohibition against something, is not the sole criteria in determining whether or not we should decide what we do. My personal understanding and conviction of what God requires of me may be the starting point, but it certainly does not end there. Think for a moment if Jesus' decision-making functioned at that level. If He had made decisions about our salvation based on His personal rights, what would have happened in the Garden of Gethsemane? What decision would He have made with the cup of our salvation? Our salvation would have been in tremendous peril. Most assuredly we would have been lost.

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As I think about the generational tensions that exist in our churches today and the growing intolerance that seems to endure, I am troubled by the elders of our churches who seem to have no patience or forbearance with any deviation from the traditions of worship and music that have caused youth and young adults to feel unwelcome in their churches.

And yet I am just as troubled by millennials who make certain choices they know will offend their elders, including playing music that adults find difficult to accept. We may have a personal right or freedom, but that is not the sole criteria which determines a Christian's decisions or actions. The Elijah message calls us to mutual submission, surrendering our personal rights and freedoms for the good of the community and realizing that the highest good is living in harmony, not conflict and selfish discord. And if true generational reconciliation is to occur, then the elders must initiate the process of mutual submission by following the example of Jesus in John 13:13-17. Among humans, being right is not righteous, it is only judgmental. Only Jesus is righteous and He calls us to a higher standard of living that says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends".

As many times as we have failed and as messed up as we are, Jesus has not given up on us. He is still depending on His church to preach and live the Elijah message, in these last days of earth's history. And lest you think otherwise He says to us, "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you. But remember the root command: Love one another" John 15:16-17 MSG.

The Elijah Message, let's start preaching it and living it.



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PLANBOOK



REACH THE WORLD

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# HEALTHY FAMILIES FOR ETERNITY

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WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

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# 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.

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### 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:

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## 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?

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### **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

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### 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 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).

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### **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 eat 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?

## 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	<p>Enjoying the positive humor of funny situations and experiences, laughing with other people, not laughing at other people's distress.</p> <p>A cheerful heart is good medicine. Proverbs 17:22.</p> <p>There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...a time to laugh. Ecclesiastes 3:1,4.</p>
Awe and wonder	<p>A sense of amazement at the beauty and intricacy of God's creation and artistry.</p> <p>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.</p>
Thankfulness	<p>Being grateful for the gifts we receive from God and other people, and for the good things in our lives.</p> <p>Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess. 5:18.</p>
Hope	<p>Believing that things can change for the better, especially when things are difficult right now.</p> <p>'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.</p>
Inspiration	<p>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.</p> <p>Psalm 104 (inspired by God's works).</p>
Joy	<p>Having a sense of pure delight and happiness.</p> <p>A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit. Proverbs 15:13.</p>
Interest	<p>Being curious and wanting to discover more about something, learning something new, or losing yourself in a positive or creative activity.</p> <p>Proverbs 31:10-31 The wife of noble character is one who pursues her interests and develops her skills well.</p>
Feeling valued and appreciated	<p>Knowing that you have done a job well, and that God and other people appreciate what you have done, too.</p> <p>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.</p>
Serenity	<p>Feeling still, peaceful, calm and content. Being free from stress, worries and fear.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>John 14:27</p> <p>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.</p>
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...

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# 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**

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

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.

## 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

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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 programming 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.

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### **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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## 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.

# 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: Jossey-Bass, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Mark and Debra Laaser, *The Seven Secrets of Every Heart* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 2008, p. 15).

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 486.

## 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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# Mission, Hope, and Healing

PETER N LANDLESS

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 TIRED 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... 27

**“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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REVIVAL & REFORMATION

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# BUILDING FAMILY MEMORIES

— ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER —



# The Gift of Memories

CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

## The Text

THE MEMORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS BLESSED  
PROVERBS 10:7

## Introduction

We probably have heard those words at many a funeral. It is at those times when we pause to express and hear all those memories of the person being memorialized. Children speak of the camping trips, or the first bicycle, or maybe the funny faces their father used to make. Or perhaps they remember those delicious pies, or the warm hugs, or the trips to buy clothes with mom. Wives speak of the way they met their husband, and of their romantic evenings together.

At every one of those sad events the good, happy memories bring laughter, and most importantly, a sort of comfort to the grieving family.

Yes, “The memory of the righteous is blessed.”

Of course, we don’t have to talk about the good memories we have only at funerals. Some of

our favorite times happen when we get together with family or friends and talk about things that happened when we were growing up, or while attending school, or time spent as neighbors.

We call that, “reminiscing.”

Uncle Steve recalls the good old days when a Ford coupe was \$500, gasoline cost 19 cents a gallon, a postage stamp was three cents, and penny candy was a treat.

Grandma June tells stories about growing up on the farm and walking three miles to school every day – uphill both ways.

Theresa fondly remembers the days of anticipation before boarding the train to visit her grandparents on the other side of the country.

Everyone frequently reminisces and reviews events of their life. It is a natural part of our lives and it is essential to our existence. But it is also extremely important for our children because those memories connect generations together and provide the kids with roots upon which they will be grounded for their future.

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## 1. Just A Ceremony?

In the second book of the Bible, Exodus, there is another story which shows how important it is for us, as parents, to build memories for our children.

God wanted to free His children from their slavery in Egypt, but the Pharaoh stubbornly refused.

Systematically, God's plagues began to wear down the Pharaoh's and the Egyptians' will until they finally let the Israelites go; in fact, they almost pushed them out.

The night of their exodus from Egypt, God instituted a ceremony; what is known as the Passover.

**IT WILL COME TO PASS WHEN YOU COME  
TO THE LAND WHICH THE LORD WILL  
GIVE YOU, JUST AS HE PROMISED, THAT  
YOU SHALL KEEP THIS SERVICE. AND  
IT SHALL BE, WHEN YOUR CHILDREN  
SAY TO YOU, 'WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY  
THIS SERVICE?' THAT YOU SHALL SAY,  
'IT IS THE PASSOVER SACRIFICE OF THE  
LORD, WHO PASSED OVER THE HOUSES  
OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN EGYPT  
WHEN HE STRUCK THE EGYPTIANS  
AND DELIVERED OUR HOUSEHOLDS.' SO  
THE PEOPLE BOWED THEIR HEADS AND  
WORSHIPPED.**

**EXODUS 12:25-27**

The Passover commemorated that last night in captivity and how the blood painted over the doorposts of every home served as the sign of protection from the death of every first-born in the land.

The Passover was not simply a national holiday, or a celebration. In reality, the annual celebration of the Passover is a reminder, a vivid lesson, directed to the children in every home where it is celebrated. It is a service not to be held at a synagogue, but a special family time at home.

The order of service for the Passover, called the Passover Seder, includes several features; songs and readings of some specific psalms. The children are involved several times when they ask questions about the meaning of each of the symbols on the table.

One of the favorite parts of the service for children is the hiding of the "afikoman", which

is a piece of the unleavened bread, a reminder of that unleavened bread the Israelites were supposed to eat, standing up, waiting for the order to leave. In some families, the head of the household hides the afikoman for the children to find, and rewards them with money or candy. In other families, the children "steal" the afikoman and ask for a reward for its return. Either way, the afikoman has become a device for keeping children awake and alert during the Seder proceedings, until the time it is needed for dessert.

For some four thousand years, children in observant Jewish homes have been reminded that their ancestors were slaves, but God miraculously delivered them. And it should have also served as a reminder of the coming of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

When Jesus, the Messiah, came and died, the Passover service was no longer needed to remind the Jewish people of the future coming of the Messiah. In its place, Jesus instituted another ceremony, what we have come to call "The Lord's Supper," or the communion service.

This is how Paul relates the events of that evening:

**FOR I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD  
THAT WHICH I ALSO DELIVERED  
TO YOU: THAT THE LORD JESUS ON  
THE SAME NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS  
BETRAYED TOOK BREAD; AND WHEN  
HE HAD GIVEN THANKS, HE BROKE  
IT AND SAID, "TAKE, EAT; THIS IS  
MY BODY WHICH IS BROKEN FOR  
YOU; DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE  
OF ME." IN THE SAME MANNER HE  
ALSO TOOK THE CUP AFTER SUPPER,  
SAYING, "THIS CUP IS THE NEW  
COVENANT IN MY BLOOD. THIS  
DO, AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT,  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME." FOR AS  
OFTEN AS YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND  
DRINK THIS CUP, YOU PROCLAIM THE  
LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COMES.**

**1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26**

It is interesting to note that Jesus didn't simply say, "Remember my death," or "gather every so often to think about the meaning of my sacrifice." Instead, He provided some powerful visual reminders – the foot-washing, the bread, and the wine. Much like the Passover, Seder has many elements to serve as a reminder of the events of that night when the Egyptians were delivered from slavery. The communion service has a number of elements to remind us of that Friday afternoon when the Lamb of God died to deliver us from our sins.

But we would like you to consider something. If the Passover service was designed by God as a teaching tool, especially for the children, is it possible that Jesus also had in mind that the communion service would serve as a teaching tool for our children? And if that is the case, shouldn't we then ensure that children get to participate as much as possible so that each of the elements of this special service will teach them about Jesus' sacrifice?

Maybe that's what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14). You see, the communion service is not just a ceremony. It is God's visual aid to draw His younger children closer to Him.

## 2. Just A Pile Of Stones?

There is another story that illustrates how important it is for children when their parents make memories, especially good memories, for and with them.

The Israelites who had been rescued from the Egyptian slavery had wondered in the desert for forty long years. The entire generation of those who left Egypt, except for a few, had died in the desert with only a distant glimpse of the Promised Land.

With Moses now dead, Joshua, the new leader, prepares the people to cross the Jordan River and to begin the conquest of that land God had promised to give to them.

Among the instructions Joshua gave the large multitude we read:

TAKE FOR YOURSELVES TWELVE MEN FROM THE PEOPLE, ONE MAN FROM EVERY TRIBE, AND COMMAND THEM, SAYING, 'TAKE FOR YOURSELVES TWELVE STONES FROM HERE, OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE JORDAN, FROM THE PLACE WHERE THE PRIESTS' FEET STOOD FIRM. YOU SHALL CARRY THEM OVER WITH YOU AND LEAVE THEM IN THE LODGING PLACE WHERE YOU LODGE TONIGHT.' THEN JOSHUA CALLED THE TWELVE MEN WHOM HE HAD APPOINTED FROM THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, ONE MAN FROM EVERY TRIBE; AND JOSHUA SAID TO THEM: CROSS OVER BEFORE THE ARK OF THE LORD YOUR GOD INTO THE MIDST OF THE JORDAN, AND EACH ONE OF YOU TAKE UP A STONE ON HIS SHOULDER, ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF THE TRIBES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THIS MAY BE A SIGN AMONG YOU WHEN YOUR CHILDREN ASK IN TIME TO COME, SAYING, 'WHAT DO THESE STONES MEAN TO YOU?' THEN YOU SHALL ANSWER THEM THAT THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN WERE CUT OFF BEFORE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE LORD; WHEN IT CROSSED OVER THE JORDAN, THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN WERE CUT OFF. AND THESE STONES SHALL BE FOR A MEMORIAL TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FOREVER.

JOSHUA 4:2-7

What an interesting command!

Take twelve stones from the middle of the river! Why not from either side of the Jordan? The answer is revealed in verses 6 and 7:

WHEN YOUR CHILDREN ASK, "WHAT DO THESE STONES MEAN?" YOU WILL TELL THEM ABOUT THE MIRACULOUS CROSSING OF THE JORDAN. THE STONES WILL SERVE AS A REMINDER, THE GIFT OF GOOD MEMORIES, NOT JUST FOR YOU BUT FOR YOUR CHILDREN AND FOR GENERATIONS YET TO COME.

John Kunz said, "Each time an individual tells part of his/her life story, those who listen are like a mirror, reflecting and affirming their lives."

Reminiscing is a gift we give others. Reminiscing is a free-flowing process of thinking or talking about our own experiences in order to reflect on and to recapture significant events in our lifetime. Obviously, we all live in the present. At the same time, we also still carry our “past” selves with us throughout our lives. We are part of a rich, wonderful history that needs to be shared and preserved.

But the stories we tell about our lives are also important sources of our self-identity. They enable us to explore and relate our past to the present.

That's one of the tragedies of dementia, amnesia, or Alzheimer's disease as the person loses their memories we lose our connection with their history, with their lives, and eventually with them.

But as long as we have the use of our minds, we can continue to create memories for ourselves and for those who follow us.

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### **3. Just A Day?**

Those who have experienced a partial or total loss of memory can attest to the fact that remembering is one of life's greatest gifts and joys.

Kim called to place an order and Krickitt answered. From that very first conversation their relationship flourished and eventually they got married in 1993.

Six months after their wedding they were going to her parents for Thanksgiving. Kirckkitt was driving when she swerved to avoid hitting a slow-moving truck. A pickup following them smashed into the Carpenters' car. Their Ford Escort flipped over on its roof and went into a sickening skid.

Her husband, Kim, was in the back seat: “I can remember every split second of that wreck. I screamed and screamed and screamed for Krickitt and got no answer.” Kim suffered a punctured lung, a bruise on his heart, a concussion and a broken hand. But worst off was Krickitt, who had suffered a terrible skull fracture when the roof of

the car caved in around her head. Unconscious and fastened in by the seatbelt, she hung upside down for 30 minutes before rescuers arrived, then 40 more before they could free her. Emergency medic D.J. Combs recalls that her pupils were fixed in a rightward gaze: “She had what we call doll's eyes.”

Three weeks after the accident, when a nurse asked her what year it was, Krickitt responded: “1969.” She was able to name her parents. But when the nurse asked, “Who's your husband?” she answered, “I'm not married.” Tests showed that she had maintained most of her long-term memory. As for her husband, he was a complete stranger; she felt nothing for him. “I don't have a visual memory in my head, and I have no memory in my heart,” she said.

When she was released from the hospital she went to live with her mother, but five months later she moved back in with her husband. But the pressures of trying to figure out how to be his wife and to share their lives were actually putting a strain on their relationship. So their therapist suggested they needed to start building new memories, which is what they did. They started dating again, chatting over pizza, shopping, Jet Skiing at a nearby lake. “I got to know my husband again,” says Krickitt. “There was a point when I really started to enjoy this companion. I would miss him if he wasn't around.”

And she fell in love with Kim again. But one thing was missing. While she had pictures of their wedding, it made her sad that she did not have memories of it. So Kim proposed again, and on May of 1996 they exchanged vows at their second wedding. Now she has pictures and her own memories of that special day.

Yes, the gift of memories! It is truly a gift to be able to remember! That is one of the reason God gave us a special weekly gift, the Sabbath, to help us remember what took place when the world was created, to remind us that He created us. Among other things, the theory of evolution has stolen from those God created the opportunity to remember Him.

After the Israelites were made free after more than 400 years of captivity, one of the first things

God wanted the emerging nation to do, before they even entered the Promised Land, was the gift of remembrance. God said, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy". (Exodus 20:8)

Like any other memories, the Sabbath grounds us and connects us with our past, and with our Maker. But the Sabbath is not just about the past. The Sabbath is about building today's memories for the future. The Sabbath is a weekly opportunity for us to gather here in God's sanctuary where we meet and worship as God's family to build more memories. Think about those who have been here with us but are now gone. Maybe they have moved to other cities, or sadly maybe they have died. Just as we think about them and miss them our hearts are also warmed with our memories of them.

The Sabbath is also a wonderful weekly opportunity to build memories with your immediate family. Think of the things you have done through the years with your family.

#### **NOTE:**

At this point you can mention some of those little Sabbath traditions and memories with your family – playing Bible games, special food, singing for sundown worship, Sabbath afternoon hikes, etc.

Let's not make the Sabbath a day when we create burdens and bitter memories. Let's be intentional about using the precious hours of God's Holy Day to build the sweetest, most special memories, especially for our children so they will grow up thinking about the Sabbath as the best, most wonderful day of the week.

It's not just a day! The Sabbath is a weekly opportunity God gives us to build family memories!

#### **4. Just A Book?**

Reading is truly a fascinating experience! Nelly Ali reveals how books provide endless opportunities to explore the world we live in, and can also give us other skills to get ahead in life.

#### **A. Imagination.**

Reading stimulates our imagination and creativity because we are transported in our mind to places where we meet people and have experiences and live through the eyes and words of the author.

#### **B. Communication**

As we read how an author phrases words it can help our own communication style, and reading will give us knowledge about many different topics, so we can talk and interact with more people. Reading also enhances our vocabulary, as we understand new words in context which we can then apply to our own conversations or writing.

#### **C. Understanding**

Books give us a deeper understanding and context, which is very useful when we have a genuine interest in learning something. Reading also allows us to develop our skills and give us broader insights into an endless list of topics. By discussing the finer points of something in detail books enhance our comprehension of it.

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#### **D. Knowledge**

Because of the great variety of books and the topics they contain books broaden our minds and help us to have a wider understanding of the world. Different genres, cultures and languages all combine together to give us experiences of something entirely new. It is possible for us to learn about a subject that perhaps we had never heard of before; in fact, it may even help us to gain a certain amount of expertise on that subject.

#### **E. Concentration and memory**

Reading helps our concentration as it requires us to focus, often for long periods of time. Reading also requires concentration in order to gain the fundamental meaning of the words, a skill that we can apply widely in all areas of our life.

#### **F. Application forms**

Reading helps us if or whenever we need to fill out job or loan application forms. People who are not used to reading may at times not be able to understand or even misunderstand some of the questions being asked.

## G. Personal interests

And last, Nelly Ali says that reading varies for each of us whether we do it for personal pleasure, or to acquire the ability to learn more or even just to display an array of interests, of whether we want to be transported into the history of the British Empire or the life of Nelson Mandela, or perhaps to learn some relationship or parenting principles. The great thing about books is that there is something for everyone's taste, which in itself is a wonder.

Research has also shown that the ability to read well is one of the best predictors of academic performance among students. Reading is one of the most valuable skills developed during childhood. Sentence removed here about research

There is one book that helps us to learn about history, health, geography, psychology, relationships, and so much more. When we read the Bible to and with our children we are helping both in their literacy development but also in their spiritual growth.

Reading a children's Bible or Bible stories is not just a good thing for the children, but another way to grow memories between us. Paul wrote:

FOR WHATEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN  
BEFORE WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR  
LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH THE  
PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE  
SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE.  
ROMANS 15:4

## 5. Just Memories?

The stories we find in the Bible were intentionally written there for a reason.

The Passover was not just a ceremony.  
The stones from the Jordan were not just a pile of stones.  
The Sabbath is not just a day.  
The Bible is not just a book.

God established and designed each of these events, each of these things as a reminder, a

memory device. He wanted His people to remember Him and to teach their children about Him.

ONLY TAKE HEED TO YOURSELF, AND  
DILIGENTLY KEEP YOURSELF, LEST YOU  
FORGET THE THINGS YOUR EYES HAVE  
SEEN, AND LEST THEY DEPART FROM  
YOUR HEART ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR  
LIFE. AND TEACH THEM TO YOUR  
CHILDREN AND YOUR GRANDCHILDREN.  
DEUTERONOMY 4:9

We can use those things God has given us to teach our children about Him and to create memories about our family and our faith. Creative memory-making brings memories back to life and can be achieved in many different ways.

Please allow me to suggest some:

1. Eat as many of the daily meals together as possible. And do it sitting around the dining room table.
2. Work together on photo albums/collages, scrapbooks.
3. Use different art forms like drawing, painting or using clay as a way to portray words and feelings. One family did a series of hand and foot prints from birth and through the years.
4. Become the family "archaeologist" – in other words, collect some historical items and significant objects like toys, antiques, or clothing that has some special significance (baby dedication outfit, graduation robes, etc.).
5. Learn music or songs together, and sing them together often.
6. Record stories from yours and your children's childhood and life. In some ways they are like your audio autobiographies.
7. Keep a "memory box" for each of your children to present to them either when they turn eighteen or when they get married.

All of these can become great conversation-starters, but also valuable recollections and

outcomes for the family about their past and for the generations that follow.

## Conclusion

Connecting the generations gives our children a history of their own. It is the gift of memories which grounds them in their faith and in their family.

REMEMBER NOW YOUR CREATOR IN THE  
DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH,  
BEFORE THE DIFFICULT DAYS COME, AND  
THE YEARS DRAW NEAR WHEN YOU SAY,  
“I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM”.  
ECCLESIASTES 12:1

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# How to Enjoy Your Imperfect Family

JOHN MCVAY

GOD LOVES YOUR IMPERFECT FAMILY AND EVERY IMPERFECT FAMILY. HE LONGS THAT EACH FAMILY MIGHT ACKNOWLEDGE HIM AS THE FATHER OF ALL AND LAY HOLD OF THE RESOURCES THAT HE HAS TO HELP THEM LIVE LIFE AS A FAMILY OF FAITH.

## Introduction

In planning for your wedding, you decide you're going to follow all 107 wedding tips that you find in *Modern Bride*. Actually, you discover that these tips provide an invaluable time-line—107 tasks to accomplish before that blissful, perfect, joyous, choice day. Under the heading "12 to 24 Months before the Wedding" you find tip # 1: "Together visit your clergy and set the date for the ceremony." Ah, that's good advice, as far as it goes. You move on down the list. You especially attend to wedding tip # 34. Now please remember, this is in a journal called *Modern Bride*. These words are addressed to brides-to-be. "Decide on your honeymoon destination. Consult a travel agent." "Traditionally," the journal goes on, "the groom makes these arrangements, but if you are better at that, don't hesitate to offer." Gentlemen, the world is changing. Under the heading "Wedding Day" come the last three tips. Number 105: "Rest and thoroughly relax in a nice warm bath." Oh sure! Number 106: "Allow at least 2 hours before the wedding to dress." And # 107: "Have a wonderful day and enjoy every moment." And you do.

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Of the 500 gowns in *Modern Bride* you choose the one on p. 328, the one labeled "Pure Perfection," the one with the elaborate hand-beading, the one your father has to drive to a small boutique in New York to purchase. But it is worth it. That's what you want your wedding day to be; that's what you want your marriage to be; that's what you want your family to be—"Pure Perfection". And as you take flight for a honeymoon in the Greek isles, you and your brand new husband imagine that your marriage, your family, will be pure perfection, one joyous port-of-call after another in an unending blissful cruise through life.

Incidentally men, *Modern Bride* doesn't fail you. They give grooms some help also. A section entitled "Planning Your Life Together," has two short articles. It is interesting that they amount to less than 4 of the journal's 518 pages!

## Looking for Pure Perfection, But . . .

Despite the notion of "life together" in *Modern Bride*, married couples today cruise straight into a statistical storm. You know the marriage/divorce statistics. Annually, in the U. S. A. there are some 2.11 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces. So, about 4 million Americans will make commitments for *life* this year. Most of those who mumble the words "I do" expect to keep the commitment. Almost every bride and every groom look forward to pure perfection. However, about half of the marriages will break apart before 15 years have passed. The percentage of first marriages

that end in divorce stands at about 40-50 percent, while the percentage of second marriages—or third or fourth marriages—that end in divorce is about 67 percent.

If your idea of a perfect home includes a mom, dad and 2.1 kids, your chances of perfection are diminishing quickly. In 1970, 40 percent of households had a mom, dad and at least one child living together. In 1990, only 26 percent of households in the United States fit that model. By the year 2012, the figure had slipped further to 19.6 percent.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 God's word predicted some rough waters in our time: "You must understand this" the apostle writes. "This has got to be part of your curriculum."

**THAT IN THE LAST DAYS DISTRESSING  
TIMES WILL COME. FOR PEOPLE WILL  
BE LOVERS OF THEMSELVES, LOVERS OF  
MONEY, BOASTERS, ARROGANT, ABUSIVE,  
DISOBEDIENT TO THEIR PARENTS,  
UNGRATEFUL, UNHOLY, INHUMAN,  
IMPLACABLE, SLANDERERS, PROFLIGATES,  
BRUTES, HATERS OF GOOD, TREACHEROUS,  
RECKLESS, SWOLLEN WITH CONCEIT,  
LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS  
OF GOD, HOLDING TO THE OUTWARD  
FORM OF GODLINESS, BUT DENYING ITS  
POWER. AVOID THEM!**

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

What a setting in which to try to maintain a commitment! What a setting in which to raise children who love God and find joy in serving others! What a mess! And, by the way, what a challenge for all who seek to minister to families. If you want a real challenge in life, become a Family Ministry professional.

**Every family is imperfect.** Sooner or later in the midst of the statistical and moral storm of these last days, you and I will discover this simple truth: Every family is imperfect. The family to which you belong, the family to which I belong, is imperfect. Worse yet, you are likely to discover that at least part of the problem with your family is with you. Once you have discovered those sad facts, what is to be done? Can nothing be done? Is it all over? If

your family is not going to be the pure perfection you had imagined it would be, is there any point to it all?

### Bearers of the Divine Name

Ephesians 3 is one of the most important passages in scripture for family ministry. Beginning with vs. 14 the apostle writes, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name." Do you like that? There is a little word play going on in the original Greek language that isn't obvious in translation. The word for "father" in Greek is "*pater*." You hear it in words like "patriarch," don't you? *Pater*. The term for "family" is "*patria*." So Paul is saying, "For this reason I bow my knees before the *Pater* from whom every *patria* in heaven and on earth takes its name." He employs the phonetics of the language. Every family (*patria*) in heaven and on earth takes its name from the Father (*Pater*).

**Your family belongs to God.** Your family with all of its imperfections belongs to God. That's what the apostle is telling us. By the way, he is also telling us, I think, that all human beings are children of the Father. Our winsome task as Christians is not so much to twist arms to pressure people to come into the Father's family, but to announce to them the winsome message that *they are already members now*. Your family with all of its imperfections belongs to God; your family with all of its imperfections is not in the cruel grip of fate, but in the caring hands of God. That is the apostle's message: God loves imperfect families. They bear the divine name; they carry the mark of God's ownership.

God loves your imperfect family and every imperfect family. He longs that every family might acknowledge Him as the Father of all and become a family of faith. When the dishes are stacked high in the kitchen sink, when the kids are screaming at each other and there is no one to help pull them apart, when the mail box is full of bills, when the relationship is devoid of thrills, when the behavior of the teenagers causes you chills—when all of this is happening—it's easy to see the problems and the impossibilities. But your family, your imperfect family and every family to which you minister is God's family. And God doesn't just hear the screams; God hears the laughter. God doesn't just

listen in on the arguments; He hears the words of affirmation. God doesn't just watch the tears that fall; He sees the ones that are wiped away.

## Accessing Divine Resources

Amid the problems and the impossibilities God invites you to consider all the possibilities and the opportunities. God longs to provide an inner strength that will give you resources to match the outward turmoil. God longs to provide you with a divine love that will help you grow. Listen as we continue to trace the thought begun in Ephesians 3:14:

FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES BEFORE THE FATHER, FROM WHOM EVERY FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH TAKES ITS NAME. I PRAY THAT, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, HE MAY GRANT THAT YOU MAY BE STRENGTHENED IN YOUR INNER BEING WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, AND THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH, AS YOU ARE BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE.

**Understanding growth and commitment.** In his book *Caring and Commitment* (1988), Lewis Smedes tells the story of his friend Ralph. Two months after Ralph's divorce, he was overwhelmed with remorse for having failed to keep his commitment. He sought relief in counseling.

"YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL," THIS PARTICULAR THERAPIST TOLD HIM, "YOU'VE CONCLUDED AN IMPORTANT STAGE IN THE JOURNEY OF SELF DISCOVERY. YOUR EX-WIFE HAS TRAVELED WITH YOU UP TO THIS POINT. SHE'S HELPED YOU ALONG AS FAR AS SHE COULD. TRUE, SHE DIDN'T BRING THE PERFECTION YOU SEEK, SO YOU MUST MOVE ON. BUT BE THANKFUL FOR HER GIFT AND TAKE IT WITH YOU AS YOU LEAVE." (p. 73).

You see, for the therapist Ralph chose, a person's commitment to marriage is an investment in his or her own growth. According to this view, when a person's investment has not yielded any growth for a while, it's time to get out of that relationship and to seek another with greater potential for personal profit. Smedes comments about this kind of "personal-investment" commitment and then

offers insight into a kind of commitment that truly leads to growth:

REAL GROWTH IS HEALTHIEST WHEN WE PUT COMMITMENT TO ANOTHER PERSON AHEAD OF GROWTH FOR OURSELF...

WE DON'T GROW INTO MATURE PERSONS BY CHASING FANTASIES. AND ONE FACT ABOUT MARRIAGE IN GENERAL IS THAT EVERY MARRIAGE IN PARTICULAR IS IMPERFECT. NO ONE MARRIES EXACTLY THE RIGHT PERSON; WE ALL MARRY SOMEONE WHO IS ONLY MORE OR LESS RIGHT FOR US. WE ARE ALL FLAWED PARTNERS. AND IF WE ACCEPT THIS REGRETTABLE BUT INVIGORATING FACT OF LIFE, WE MAY BE READY FOR REAL GROWTH.

WE DO NOT GIVE OURSELF A GOOD CHANCE FOR GROWING PERSONALLY IF WE KEEP HANKERING AFTER OUR FANTASY OF THE IDEAL WOMAN. OR MAN. WE GROW WHEN WE KEEP RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ONLY SPOUSE WE'VE GOT. WE GROW WHEN WE STOP DREAMING OF A PERFECT MARRIAGE AND ADJUST CARINGLY TO THE ONE WE HAVE. OUR BEST GROWTH COMES WHEN WE FORGET ABOUT OUR OWN GROWTH AND FOCUS ON CARING INSTEAD. (p. 73).

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"Here is a nice twist," Smedes concludes, "instead of giving us a good reason for giving up a lifetime commitment, our need to grow is a prime reason for keeping it" (p. 74). Smedes' words are true not only in the husband-wife relationship, but also in the commitment each family member makes to another.

Returning to Ephesians 3, "I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (vv. 16-19).

**Growing in love.** The age in which we live is not one that's kind to families. Love tends to get drained out of families. But, says the apostle, "I am praying that you might know something of the grand dimension of God's love; I'm praying that you might have a transfusion of love, of divine love that will be more than a match for the turmoil and the temptations of the times. God loves imperfect families like yours, like mine, like the ones to which we minister. So the apostle says, "I'm praying that you will be able to establish a family of love, a family of faith. I'm praying that you will be able to nurture families of faith."

**NOW TO HIM WHO BY THE POWER AT  
WORK WITHIN US IS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH  
ABUNDANTLY FAR MORE THAN ALL THAT WE  
CAN ASK OR IMAGINE, TO HIM BE GLORY IN  
THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS TO ALL  
GENERATIONS, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.  
EPHESIANS 3:20,21**

## Jay and His Imperfect Family

Consider the case of a man whom I will call Jay. I don't know when Jay first sensed that his family was less than perfect, but it must have been quite early. The family recording tapes had rather faithfully captured past events and, though perhaps no one had intended to deliberately do so, those tapes frequently played and replayed.

Little by little Jay as a growing child picks up sound bites—a sigh of disgust hurriedly stifled, or a smirk on an older sibling's face that is quickly erased when parents enter the room. Slowly, but surely, Jay begins to piece together the story of his family and his own part in it.

Clearly his older siblings regard him as inferior. At a rather tender age he discovers the reason: his mother is not their mother. Though it takes him a little longer to catch this part of the story, the date of his conception apparently precedes the date of his parents' wedding. (This happened years ago when the sense of morality about inappropriate relationships ran deeper. Yet, despite this sense of morality, people did not understand that, though there maybe an illegitimate relationship of a child's parents,

there is no such thing as an illegitimate child.) His older siblings looked down on his mother for seducing their father. They also looked down on her son.

**Bearing family pain.** Things did not go well in the family. Relationships were not what they should have been. All the family members now sense how imperfect the family is and they begin to provide a classic example of what is commonly called "scapegoating," making one person bear the burden of the family's dysfunction. Our family's having problems, they conclude. There must be reasons for the problems. They focus on Jay. Jay, he's the reason. If only Jay would shape up, or if only Jay were out of the picture, everything would be all right. In families like this, there is no attention to the family as a system, no treatment of the family as a unit, no attention to an unhealthy complex of relationships, only blame heaped again and again upon one who has been designated the scapegoat.

One incident in his early adolescence shaped, or perhaps misshaped, Jay's self concept. He and his family are on vacation at a favorite spot. When it comes time to go, the family packs up and leaves, but something is left behind. It's not just their favorite vacation spot. It's something more than the family cat or the old portable ice-chest cooler. They leave Jay! The experience serves as a kind of metaphor for this family's dysfunction and Jay's place in it: Things would probably be happier if he were not around. If he would just get lost, maybe this family would be, could be, a perfect family.

**Grasping a sense of one's specialness.** Things only worsen when the father dies. But Jay is quite an incredible person. You know the human spirit can be indomitable. Amidst it all—the tapes of a sordid past, the scapegoating, the conglomerate family, the sneers and smirks, the condescending gestures, Jay manages somehow to grab on to the idea that, no matter what the others believe, he is special. He has a place in life, he has a destiny, a mission, and eventually he finds his own enterprise that meets with amazing success.

His brothers won't let the old stories die though; they jeer at his achievements. They try to get him to over extend his resources to prove his worth to them,

but he refuses. In the midst of his accomplishments, they are able to turn his own mother against him. They manage to get her to support their plot to identify his genius as lunacy. This must have hurt him deeply.

Eventually, the family tapes play again. This time, the sound is loud—at concert levels on a grand scale. Jay becomes the scapegoat, not just for his family but for his nation. He dies an ugly death—on a Roman cross.

## How Jay's Family Changed

Something happens, however, at the foot of that old rugged cross. Something happens to the family of Jesus. Have you noticed it? In the Book of Acts, in the introduction to this glorious story about a period in the life of the church following Jesus' ascension, Scripture says, "All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). All these people were doing what? Devoting themselves to prayer. And the passage continues, "...together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers."

Moving on through the New Testament we come to a couple of little books that are often thought to have been written by two of Jesus' brothers, James and Jude. Notice James' introduction in his letter: "James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." James, a servant of Jesus! And in James 2:1, "My brothers and sisters, do you . . . really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?" Wow! Then we come to that little letter of Jude. Verses 1, 2 read, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." Don't you like that? "To those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance." Verse 4 refers to Jesus as "our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Something happens at the foot of the old rugged cross that transforms some well-worn footage in the family tapes. Something happens that converts the scapegoating into worshiping. The family of Jesus, imperfect as it is, becomes a family of faith.

## Conclusion

The message of the story—the gospel story—is this: the change in Jesus' family is not an isolated case. The same transformation can occur in your family and in mine and in each family to whom we minister.

**FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES BEFORE THE FATHER, FROM WHOM EVERY FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH TAKES ITS NAME. I PRAY THAT, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, HE MAY GRANT THAT YOU MAY BE STRENGTHENED IN YOUR INNER BEING WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, AND THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH, AS YOU ARE BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE. I PRAY THAT YOU MAY HAVE THE POWER TO COMPREHEND, WITH ALL THE SAINTS, WHAT IS THE BREADTH AND LENGTH AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH, AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE, SO THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD. NOW TO HIM WHO BY THE POWER AT WORK WITHIN US IS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH ABUNDANTLY FAR MORE THAN ALL WE CAN ASK OR IMAGINE, TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS TO ALL GENERATIONS, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.**

**EPHESIANS 3:14-21**

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## The Text

**SO THEN, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,  
STAND FIRM AND HOLD FAST TO THE  
TRADITIONS THAT YOU WERE TAUGHT BY  
US, EITHER BY WORD OF MOUTH OR BY  
OUR LETTER.**

**2 THESSALONIANS 2:15**

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A family had tried unsuccessfully for years to save enough money to replace their ancient bathroom fixtures with new modern sleek ones. But each year as skiing time rolled around, the bathroom money went for a family skiing trip.

The children are now grown. The son recently wrote to his parents. He talked about the annual skiing trips and the wonderful memories he had of them. His father chuckled as he read the letter. He said to his wife, "Honey, I'm glad we spent the bathroom money for those skiing trips. I can't imagine our son writing home and saying, 'I sure do remember our wonderful bathroom fixtures.'" Our children are with us such a short period of time. What have you done with them lately to build some beautiful memories?

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# Making Memories

CLAUDIO & PAMELA CONSUEGRA

The dictionary defines traditions as "memories, customs, habits, and information handed down from one generation to another over the years, that become time-honored practices."

Making memories and creating traditions!

### SEMINAR NOTE

Throughout this seminar you may illustrate each of the points being made with stories from your own experience, from your family, or from others you may know about.

### Three Results of Traditions in Successful Families:

#### 1. Traditions Bring a Family Together, Causing the Members to Know One Another Better.

- Traditions often are unexpected. Establishing traditions begins with and is the responsibility of the parents. Traditions often begin as magical, miraculous moments. Many events which become lasting traditions were unexpected. We call them "magical, miraculous moments."

One year when our oldest daughter was young, we created a treasure hunt of

sorts for her birthday. We bought a few small things (sugar-free chewing gum, a small toy, an apple, etc.), and we hid them throughout the house. Under each item we placed a clue so that she would find the next item. The final item was her birthday gift. We all had fun together going from place to place, finding the different objects.

We did that for several years, something she looked forward to. But in her teen years we thought she probably was getting too old and would not care to do that anymore, so we didn't do it. We simply presented her with her birthday present. We could see the dismay and disappointment in her face, so we asked her what was the matter. Almost with tears in her eyes she told us she had been looking forward to the treasure hunt.

That simple activity became a kind of tradition, one that we all still remember as part of her growing years.

## SEMINAR NOTE

Do you have a story of a tradition in your family that had an unexpected beginning? You may share that with the group. Or you can ask them to share one of their own.

- Traditions are often unplanned. They emerge on their own. These moments emerge as families talk with one another, play together, and have decided to love one another in complete acceptance. Traditions will establish themselves if you simply allow them to be a part of your family. When you least expect it, a tradition will emerge with a great memory on its heels.

I'm not sure when or how, but we started a food tradition that we would make and eat Mexican tostadas on Friday evenings. We did that probably through all the growing years of all

our daughters. The first Friday evening our oldest daughter was in a boarding school (Adventist Academy), she called us crying because they didn't have Mexican tostadas for dinner. The food, and the family tradition that goes with it, were very entrenched in her life. But it was not a tradition we planned to begin; it simply developed naturally.

## CONNECT

Do you have a story of an unplanned tradition in your family? You may share it with the group. Or you can ask them to share one of their own.

## 2. Traditions Create Positive Memories Which Can Provide Encouragement and Stability

Traditions are memories of memories. The memories which accompany our traditions can have a powerful impact. As recorded in Psalm 137:1, while the children of Israel were in captivity what was their response regarding their memories?

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BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON – THERE WE SAT DOWN AND THERE WE WEPT WHEN WE REMEMBERED ZION.

PSALMS 137:1

Traditions are usually small in monetary value – but PRICELESS!

## SHARE

Maybe you have left your home or your country and now live in a different land. Share some of the memories of your homeland that you have shared with your family and children. What was your experience like of coming to where you now live? Ask others in your group of their experience.

## 3. Traditions Are Cherished and Passed along to Future Generations

In the play, "Fiddler On The Roof," at his daughter's wedding, Tevye, (the father)

sings a song which echoes traditions and memories that move from one generation to another:

**“IS THIS THE LITTLE GIRL I CARRIED? IS THIS THE LITTLE BOY AT PLAY? I DON’T REMEMBER GROWING OLDER, WHEN DID THEY? SUNRISE, SUNSET, SUNRISE, SUNSET, QUICKLY FLY THE ‘YEARS. ONE SEASON FOLLOWING ANOTHER, LADEN WITH HAPPINESS AND TEARS.” SUNRISE, SUNSET”**

His words are all about tradition and the sweet memories they bring. Another memorable song from the musical is entitled “Tradition!” A portion of its lyrics include the following words.

**“TRADITION? THE PAPA, TRADITION... THE MAMA, TRADITION... THE SON AND THE DAUGHTER, TRADITION... A FAMILY? TRADITION, TRADITION, TRADITION!”**

## **Seven Practical Ideas To Build Positive Memories And Traditions**

We'd like to share seven ideas you could implement to begin building life-lasting traditions in your home, for your family.

### **1. Family Night:**

Choose one night a week in which the family determines to be together. It might include dinner at home or at a favorite restaurant. Allow your children to help make the decision as to what you will do. Turn off the television. Talk, laugh, and play together. Wrestle on the floor and do things that require talking to one another. Family night must be a commitment that is honored. Allow nothing to interrupt it or take its place. Remember, on family night the television, iPad, computers, cell phones, and video games are not allowed to be in the room!

We recommend that you play games that are not too competitive in nature so a great night of fun does not lead anyone to feel like they have lost or others to gloat that they have won. There is a great game to encourage the sharing

of thoughts, feelings, and ideas and it is called “The Ungame.” You may also put some puzzles together (make sure they are age appropriate), or some game of soccer, basketball, softball, or whatever game that would involve both physical activity and as many members of the family as possible.

Plan on some special meal, although it does not have to be a major gourmet production every time. Sometimes a simple meal with popcorn, sandwiches, or ordering a pizza may be all you need. While you could occasionally watch a family movie, don't make it a practice unless you spend time talking about it afterwards. Simply watching movies does not provide for the interaction that creates and builds memories.

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### **CONNECT**

Ask the group to share any other ideas of activities that the family could do together on family night.

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### **2. Date Night:**

This is as much for the children as it is for mom/dad. You are modeling a behavior. One of the most important traditions in any family is an established date night for Mom and Dad. It creates a positive picture for the children as they see their parents choose one night a week to be alone together and to focus on their love for each other. Early in our marriage we could only afford to make our own sandwiches and take them to the park to eat or go on a quiet drive, but the goal was intimacy, not extravagance.

It is also important for parents to take their children out on dates. Fathers should take their daughters and moms should take their sons. If you have more than one child, only take one at a time. A simple, age-appropriate date is all that is needed. The important thing is to spend one -on -one time with your child in communication. Dads, you are modeling how a young man should treat your little girl. Pull her chair out for her and open the car door for her. Moms, you are showing your little boy

how he should treat his future wife. Be mindful of words used and the common courtesies. This simple date will have lessons that your little ones will take with them into future life as a husband/father and wife/mother.

A date does not have to be expensive, either. The key is to be intentional about making time to be with your spouse or with your child, one-on-one, as it provides an opportunity to exchange ideas, express feelings, share concerns, pray together, and build memories.

## CONNECT

Ask the group to share any ideas of activities that could take place on date nights.

### 3. Birthdays:

Everyone in the family should feel special on their birthday. Always remember that no one likes to have their birthday forgotten! It doesn't cost much money to celebrate that day with great importance and fanfare. The birthday person might get breakfast in bed to begin their day. Be creative. It is a special day loaded with opportunities to make family memories.

Take advantage of modern technology – send them a text message early in the morning, post your feelings on Facebook, send them an eCard. Gifts are a way to express your love as well. It is not the cost of the gift that matters as much as the meaning you give it and the time you spend choosing something appropriate for their age and interests.

Ever since our younger daughter began to show an interest for the medical profession we found several birthday gifts through the years that encouraged her to continue to move in the direction of her dreams. One year we bought her a toy doctor's kit complete with a stethoscope, syringe, and tongue depressor. Today she is a physician and a surgeon in training.

Each of our daughters asked for a birthday meal of their choice. Our oldest daughter preferred strawberry, while our youngest daughter chose

chocolate. What that meant was that mom usually baked a cake, or bought ice cream of those flavors for their birthday. As mentioned earlier, we also had a treasure hunt for our oldest daughter. Regardless of where they were living at the time, we always made contact with them and, if possible, we made arrangements to be with them during their birthday as well.

## IDEAS

Ask the group to share any other ideas of how to make birthdays special, memorable times for the members of the family, specially the children.

### 4. Mealtime:

What's the most powerful place in your home? The dining room table! Turn off the television and eat together. Do not allow a day to go by without sitting down as a family and eat around the dinner table. The conversation can be electric, hilarious, and invigorating. Some of the family greatest memories may be from those dinner-table conversations.

Do not rob yourselves as a family of this important memory-making opportunity by eating on a plate while watching the television. Sit down as a family and enjoy a meal together with no outside distractions.

Not only are meal times important memory builders, but they are also powerful tools to help and even save your children. Much research has shown that your child may be 35% less likely to engage in disordered eating, 24% more likely to eat healthier foods and 12% less likely to be overweight. Kids who ate dinner with their families at least five times per week were the least likely to take drugs, feel depressed or get into trouble.

The key of the research is that the family needs to share family meals at least five times per week. At the same time, forcing everybody to enjoy every single meal together seven days a week may not be realistic and may actually be detrimental as it may be too controlling.

Make each meal a positive, memorable time together.

### SHARE WITH THE GROUP

Ask the group to share their memories and experiences during family meals.

### 5. Your Faith:

Spiritual traditions play an important part in the family. Saying grace before meals is one way for a family to connect with each other every day. Daily Scripture reading and prayer times will create wonderful memories. Worshiping together can enhance communication among family members.

In addition to attending church together, make it a point for your family to attend special events in your church such as candlelight services, special performances, or special Christmas or Easter services each year.

Your children will carry these memories and traditions with them into their future families. Do not be so hurried that you neglect prayer before a meal or the evening family devotional.

As always, make sure to make family devotional time age-appropriate. Younger children need a lot more activities, shorter time, and a lot less reading. As they get older, you can include more stories, sometimes videos, or other activities. Always try to not make this time about you but about your children.

### CONNECT

Ask the group to share any other ideas of how to make daily family devotional times special for the members of the family, specially the children.

### 6. Family Vacations: car games, maps, planning

Circle the date on the calendar, get the camera ready, and don't let anything get in the way! Loads of great memories are created from time spent with your family on vacation.

The goal of a good, tradition-building vacation is not how much money you spend

or how many miles you log but how much fun you have in the process!

A much anticipated family vacation happened a few years ago. We had been saving flying miles on one of our credit cards for years until we finally had enough for four tickets to Spain. We had also saved enough vacation days so that we were able to spend three weeks traveling throughout southern Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar. Even today, those several years later, we still talk about that trip and sometimes we even sit down to go over all the pictures we took.

But not all vacations have to be to a faraway land. Some of the most enjoyable things we ever did were road trips not far from home. Those one-day excursions at the drop of a hat were more fun than a day spent at any amusement park. Vacation together and make positive memories and traditions.

Be very careful and guard these dates in your calendar. There are far too many families that never take vacation. Do not let this be something you regret later on not doing when it is too late.

### INTERACT

Invite the group to share a memorable experience during a family vacation.

### 7. Holidays:

Holidays are perfect for establishing traditions and making memories. They're the "mother lode" of opportunities. Everyone needs to belong somewhere. Even hardened gang members claim the reason they join a gang is because they need to belong. Perhaps the greatest benefit of traditions for your family is to provide members with a way to connect and identify with their family, to be a part of something greater than themselves. Traditions and the accompanying positive memories provide them with hope for tomorrow's memories.

Holidays are different around and every family celebrates them differently. For me (Claudio), growing up in Colombia, South

America, the centerpiece of Christmas was the Christmas manger or crèche, and the presents were distributed on the evening of December 24. For me (Pamela), growing in Virginia, in the United States, the centerpiece of Christmas was the Christmas tree, and the presents were distributed on the morning of December 25.

National holidays are also great opportunities for families to build memories together. Maybe you can go to one of the parades, or to a patriotic concert, or maybe to a national museum which may be open during the holidays.

### BOUNDING MOMENT

Invite the group to share a memorable experience during a holiday.

### Closing

Every family celebrates and builds memories in their own unique way. What are your traditions? What are some of your best memories? The point

is to establish those positive family memories and traditions. You may live in many different homes. You may move from place to place. Your children grow up. And, yes, we may even lose some of our family members to death until Jesus returns to take us to heaven. But, meanwhile, we have our memories of times spent together as a family. Nothing is so sacred as helping our children create those positive memories and experiences that will lead them to heaven!

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# Frequent Family Dinners Protect Our Children

ALINA M. BALTAZAR, KATHERINE CONOPIO,  
GARY HOPKINS AND DUANE MCBRIDE

## Theme

Frequent family dinners have multiple benefits to children and teens that aid in positive youth development.

## Introduction

Family gatherings around the table have been seen as a national pastime throughout human history. In this fast-paced generation, however, families are slowly drifting apart for many reasons: demanding jobs that require less time at home, extra-curricular activities in schools and conveniences of communication that do not need the family to be present while engaging in conversations; ability and access to drive or having easier transportation systems, as well as other activities – such as television viewing, sports, etc. – have trumped family meals. Yet research has consistently found that frequent family dinners can protect youth from a number of dangerous elements.

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## GROUP DISCUSSION

Have the group report what they think interferes with family meals in this modern world.

The following information is from an extensive review of the literature and from original research conducted at the Institute for the Prevention of Addiction at Andrews University on the topic of family dinners. Research has found that family dinners have multiple ways it leads to positive outcomes for youth. Family meals create an environment where there is an opportunity for the family to communicate to each other leading to lasting bonds between the parents and their children. They are a place to discuss problems and solutions and can create a form of tradition/ritual that promote unity, stability, and routine. In addition, parents can use family mealtimes to monitor the whereabouts of the children, get to know and hear about the friends and people that they interact with away from home and help give them advice and guidance for decisions in the future.

Family meals are also associated with better social and mental stability. Children and teenagers who engage in family dinners and spend time with their parents are found to have higher self-esteem, are less depressed and have lower rates of suicide ideation. Family meals contribute to better eating habits and nutrition

intake and eating meals together provide an opportunity to promote more positive food choices among adolescents.

Many think that young people these days do not enjoy these kinds of activities but studies have found that the vast majority still enjoy it. One study reveals that 79% of teenagers enjoy dining with their families. Another study reports that children enjoy the social aspects of eating together as a family and that family meals are considered pleasurable occasions; they become part of the day which they look forward to with 65% of teenagers and 75% of parents saying that they would be willing to give up a weekend activity if that would enable them to have dinner as a family.

### GROUP ACTIVITY

Have the group reminisce about their positive memories around family dinners from their childhood. What did they enjoy about their family meals as a child?

### Family Dinners as Protection

The adolescent and teenage years are a time of exploration and when they will decide what type of person they will be when they grow up. However this searching can lead to decisions that will result for them to engage in unhealthy and risky paths. The main threat to adolescents' health in the United States is the behaviors that put their health at risk due to the negative choices that they make. The risky behaviors that adolescents typically participate in include alcohol, tobacco, substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, eating disorders, and delinquent activities such as theft and being part of a gang. These risk factors harm the adolescent physically and psychologically and they affect their mental well-being as well. At this stage their thoughts on their self-value, body and/or self-image, depression, suicide ideation, and decision-making skills can present as major challenges in their lives.

Studies on family meals focus on the advantages of frequency on family dinners. Due to the advantages that family dinners offer, the increased number of times families have dinner together have shown decreased rates of risky behaviors and an increase of positive behaviors. Having frequent meals at least 5 times a week provide the opportunities to reduce the likelihood that adolescents/teenagers will participate in alcohol drinking, substance abuse, sexual activities (or early participation), and develop eating disorders. Family meals not only offer protection during the teen years, but extend to the first two years while kids are away at college. Adventist college students who are 18 and 19 years old and have 5 family dinners a week when home, are significantly less likely to use alcohol in the past year.

Family dinners not only reduce risky behaviors, but also increase the safety of our youth. Recent research found that the likelihood that one will become victim to any number of situations decreases the more frequent time one participates in family dinners. They were less likely to be bullied at school, be slapped by a boy/girlfriend, and date raped. In addition, they are even more apt to take safety precautions such as wearing a seatbelt and a bicycle helmet. This is a fascinating result because family dinner produces such a strong protective factor that it would increase the protection of an individual from becoming a victim to someone or something. Family dinners are packed with such strong influences that if the environment of the mealtime is positive and it is practiced frequently enough, many unwanted behaviors and practices can be avoided.

There are some important things to keep in mind when having a family meal; it should be a pleasant experience. If there is constant family conflict present, research has found that adolescent and teenagers think family dinners are more of a negative experience than a positive. The family table is not a time to criticize and attack one another. Of course, studies have also found that dislike of

food being served during family meals also can bring a negative attitude to the table.

With so many families being pulled in many directions, family meals at 6 p.m. five times a week may not be realistic. Family meals don't have to be at the traditional dinner time, it can be earlier or later on some days. If you can get up earlier, the meal can also be at breakfast time. Weekends can be a time of special meals where higher priority is given to family togetherness. The point is to have face to face time around an enjoyable activity where there can be a good solid conversation.

In order for that conversation to take place, there shouldn't be any distraction. So that means for kids and parents the TV should be off, phones and tablets should not be at the table, and let the phone go to voice mail. Get unplugged and enjoy!!

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### GROUP DISCUSSION

What are some ways that family meals can be more enjoyable for the whole family? When is a good time for your family to have more regular meals together?

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# Memorials of the Heart and Mind

SALLY LAM-PHOON

When God created time within the framework of eternity, I often wonder if the past would play as significant a part as it does now. When sin entered the world and time became linear, we have a clear separation of the past, the present, and the future. The past with its experiences, its joys and sorrows became a learning platform for the present and the future as we grapple with decisions to be made.

In Joshua 4, we have the story of how Joshua led the children of Israel through the Jordan into the first location in the land of Canaan, Gilgal. God again performed the miracle of parting the waters, this time of the Jordan River, so they could go through on dry land. This event was so significant that Joshua ordered them to move 12 stones (Joshua 4:4-7) from the depths of the Jordan River and construct a memorial (verse 7) to remind their children and generations to come of God's leading.

With the introduction of sin into our world, we are so often distracted. We forget how God has led us and how He has been constantly watching over us. Ellen White writes: We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history (*Counsels for the Church*, p. 359). Our past

history is truly crucial; lessons learned can take teach us how we can live more effectively in the present.

Unfortunately, there are times when we choose to ignore our past; we consider our forbearers to be outdated and irrelevant. We argue that their circumstances and environment were far too different from ours today. We refer to technology that has re-shaped our world, affected the way we function, the way we think and the way we make decisions. It's a brand new age; a brand new world that holds so much potential.

Over three years ago, on March 11, 2011, fishermen who were twenty miles from the Eastern shore of Japan barely noticed a small wave of about fifteen inches that swept by under their boats. When they returned to the port of Sanriku, they were totally unprepared for the complete devastation that had taken place while they were busy fishing.

Whole cities had disappeared along a stretch of 170 miles of coastline; 29,000 people were reported as dead or missing. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake that triggered a powerful tsunami in 2011 was not the first one of its kind. Japan had suffered numerous tsunamis and earthquakes through the centuries. After each disaster, the Japanese had erected memorial stones, hundreds of them, (some as tall as 10 feet) along Japan's northeastern shore to warn future generations never to build beyond these points.

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But as time went on, people forgot. For convenience, many fishermen and others built their homes and businesses closer and closer to the sea, ignoring the warnings etched in stone. After all, didn't the government build strong wave walls that could withstand any tsunami? They had faith in Japanese technology and the modern concrete barriers that appeared sufficient to protect them from these waves.

Those who heeded the messages on the memorial stones were spared on that fateful March 11. The magnitude of this latest tsunami was such that even some of the memorial stones themselves were destroyed.

Memorials of wood and stone are found all over the world--the Hiroshima Peace Park built at the epicenter of the first atomic bomb that was dropped in Japan; the Taj Mahal, a memorial of love in India from a king to his spouse; the September 11 Memorials in the United States that serve as a reminder of the horrors of terrorism. Hundreds of thousands visit these monuments that have become "must-see" tourist attractions. As tourists click their cameras (or their smart phones today), most of them may not even understand their significance.

Far beyond the influence of these kinds of memorials, are the memorials of the heart and mind. These arise from significant moments in time. They may be reminders of challenging or even life-threatening experiences or perhaps places associated with milestones in our life. Memorials of the heart and mind evoke a plethora of emotions for an individual, particularly when they are connected to the warmth of family. Some treasure their memories with a diary, through a traditional family practice/tradition, or by sharing stories and testimonies of how God has led them and provided for them in the past.

The story is told of a veteran in Florida, Eddie Rickenbacker, who feeds seagulls at the beach every Friday afternoon. This is his memorial of an experience during the World War II, when he was adrift on the Pacific with seven others in shark-infested waters. By the eighth day, they had completely run out of food that they

had so carefully rationed. But Eddie, a devout Christian, prayed, "God, please send us food."

A seagull landed on his head; the men caught it and that was their meal for the day. They saved the intestines as bait to catch fish. They survived 24 days in the open sea before they were eventually rescued.

He never forgot the sacrificing act of that seagull and in gratitude, he has fed seagulls ever since (Max Lucado, *In The Eye of the Storm*, pp. 221, 225-226).

The Sabbath stands as a memorial of creation and redemption; it reminds us of God's rest after the world was made, as well as His deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt as a symbol of our own salvation in Jesus. Sabbath keepers create many traditions to honor this special time. Many families cook special meals for Sabbath. One of my friends would make delicious cinnamon rolls only on Friday evenings, and the sweet smell of cinnamon create special memories of the Sabbath and what it means.

For another family, Sabbath meant a special time when Daddy was with them; Daddy worked away from home from Monday through Friday. Daddy made Sabbath extra special by spending time with the children, chatting with them, listening to the highlights of their week and sharing his own.

For another kind of memorial, a father, who was focused on teaching his children about their obligations to the community, made it a tradition to turn a family outing one Sunday a month to a service of love. They chose to visit a facility that needed their help. The children learned to minister to the elderly, visit cancer patients, share clothes and toys with orphans. The parents awoke in their children a spirit of gratitude for the abundance they enjoyed at home. As they saw how fortunate they were, they were encouraged to set aside their own pocket money in a special money box throughout the year to buy gifts and bring joy to these disadvantaged people every Christmas.

For our family, the Chinese (Lunar) New Year reunion dinner is one meal that brings every member together. Our children were taught from an early age that they could miss any other meal but not this one significant meal. We gather around the table, laden with our favorite and special dishes, and each in turn shares his/her gratitude to God for another year of life, another year closer to the coming of Jesus.

Family traditions may be as simple as lighting a candle, or just being together at planned times. They will be forever etched in the minds of those who had the privilege of sharing them. It takes just a little time and intentionality for us to

decide that we want to create these memorials of the heart and mind. No matter how busy we are, if we would commit to making a memory every so often, we would be building a strong foundation for a lasting sense of identity and belonging among our family members and others we come into contact with.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/21/world/asia/21stones.html>

**HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD our GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. THESE COMMANDMENTS THAT I GIVE YOU TODAY ARE TO BE ON YOUR HEARTS. IMPRESS THEM ON YOUR CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT THEM WHEN YOU SIT AT HOME AND WHEN YOU WALK ALONG THE ROAD, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU GET UP.**

**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7 (NIV)**

**"IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME WHEN EVERY HOUSE SHOULD BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER, IT IS NOW."**

**ELLEN G. WHITE<sup>1</sup>**

**Family Worship** is the regular, intentional gathering as a family unit to worship God by reading scripture, praying, singing praise, and finding ways to be involved in ministry and evangelism together. There are four major components to every family worship: "Read – Pray – Sing – Mission."<sup>2</sup> Every Christian family should have such time daily.

Although Barna's research shows that 85% of parents believe they are primarily

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# Creating Exciting Family Worship

S. JOSEPH KIDDER

responsible for the moral and spiritual development of their children<sup>3</sup>, among "churched" families, fewer than 10% read the Bible, pray (outside of meals), or participate in an act of service as a family in a typical week. One out of twenty have a family worship experience outside of church in a typical month<sup>4</sup>. Among active SDA members, 40% of families never have worship at home<sup>5</sup>, 27% have worship on a daily basis<sup>6</sup>; 33% have family worship once a week.<sup>7</sup>

Gather the whole family at least one time this week and have family worship. "Read – Pray – Sing – Mission." If this is new for the family, keep it very simple. Sit in a circle. **Read** a few Bible verses (Luke 19:1-10), a parent can lead a short **prayer**, and a simple **song** (such as "Jesus Loves Me").

Worship of the Lord is first vertical—connecting with God through prayer, worship, and Bible study—then horizontal—connecting with people through ministry and evangelism beginning in the home, involving the whole family (Matthew 22:37-39).

In the remaining part of this article I will give the purpose of family worship and some practical suggestions and methods for family worship. These ideas and examples are gleaned from interviews conducted with 21<sup>8</sup> families regarding the best way to have family worship.

## I. What Is the Purpose of Family Worship?

There are many purposes for family worship. Below are the major ones:

**First, to worship God together and learn more of His ways.** Children should learn to worship God in their early years so that they might develop love and respect for Him in their later years. They need to learn how to relate to Him and to realize that He is the loving Creator, the Lord, the Savior, holy, and deserves to be honored in all that they say and do. “Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The worship of God is beneficial for all ages. It brings the family closer together with each other and God.

**Second, to honor God’s Word, develop respect for it, and live by it.** James says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). Furthermore, Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). Home is a good place to practice this exhortation, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). We need to honor the Bible in our homes and teach our children from it.

**Third, to assist in the faith development of children.** Barna gives the probability of someone accepting Christ as Savior as follows: 32% age 5 – 13; 4% age 14 – 18; 6% age 19 – older.<sup>9</sup> This makes it imperative that families do everything they can to be intentionally active in the religious upbringing of their children. Barna also notes that only 1/3 of teens surveyed expected to stay in church once they were living on their own<sup>10</sup>. Research shows that children whose families are active in their faith development have a higher probability of staying in the church<sup>11</sup>. It is the desire of parents to have Christian children who will grow up with a commitment to Christ, embrace good moral standards, and become a witness for Christ in the community; children who not only take the church seriously,

but enjoy being part of it. Paul acknowledges the value of knowing the scriptures and living by them from a young age when addressing Timothy:

BUT AS FOR YOU, CONTINUE IN WHAT  
YOU HAVE LEARNED AND HAVE BECOME  
CONVINCED OF, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THOSE  
FROM WHOM YOU LEARNED IT, AND HOW  
FROM INFANCY YOU HAVE KNOWN THE  
HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO  
MAKE YOU WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH  
FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.

**2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15**

**Fourth, to establish the family in faith, personal convictions, and doctrine.** Children, young people, and adults need convictions to stand up for their faith. They must understand their faith and know that it is Bible-based. It is important to know what they believe and why. The home makes a good Bible school where the children can be grounded as they face the humanistic, evolutionary philosophy of modern society.

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**Fifth, to pray over family problems, needs, burdens the children may have so that they may have confidence in the God who answers prayers.** All family members have personal needs. It would be good if they could learn to share them openly and take them before the Lord together. There are school needs, relationship problems, character issues such as timidity and fears of all kinds; questions about entertainment, pornography, etc. Teenagers have deep needs and hate to express them for fear of being misunderstood or feeling embarrassed. Their problems are big to them and must be considered. Parents can model taking their needs to God in prayer. All family members need to know that God will hear and answer them, thus building confidence in Him. Children who learn to pray openly at home will have no problem praying publicly in the church or weekly prayer meetings as they grow.

**Sixth, to pray and intercede for others with regard to their needs or trials.** Praying for the spiritual and physical needs of others helps to shift the focus off of self. It also provides an opportunity for those praying for the Lord to open their hearts

and minds to be more compassionate. This will result in an increased desire for ministry, mission, and evangelism.

**Finally, to find relevant and meaningful ways to minister in the church, in the home, and in the world.** When a family takes on a project together, it brings the family closer and allows God to use them to bless the world. Here are some examples of ways families can minister: adopting a less fortunate family to pray over and help out during the holidays; hosting a small group, sing and fellowship at nursing homes; help out at a food pantry or sharing food with the homeless; give Bible studies and visit others as a family.

## II. Practical Suggestions for Creating an Effective Family Worship Environment

Creating an effective environment for family worship sets the stage for continued thriving worship experiences. One of the most important factors is your own spirituality. If worship is important for you, your children will make it important for themselves. Kids pick up on what is really important to parents. Effective family worship begins by making Jesus a priority in your life. Paul said, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Your family sees what is important to you. If you have a strong relationship with Christ and live His love, others will want to emulate you.

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Search out methods that will appeal to all age levels in the family.** Different ages have different interests and what may appeal to one, will not appeal to another. Vary the methods so as to keep family worship from being boring and routine. Interest for all should be maintained so monotony does not kill it. “Fathers and mothers, make the hour of worship intensely interesting. There is no reason why this hour should not be the most pleasant and enjoyable of the day. A little thought given to preparation for it will enable you to make it full of interest and profit. From time to time let the service be varied.”<sup>12</sup>

2. **Make it a delightful, happy, interesting time filled with enthusiasm so the whole family looks forward to it with expectancy.** Do not make it a time of forced listening to the Bible or of bitter participation while you drone through whole chapters of the Bible beyond family comprehension and then drag the family through a long, dry, routine prayer. If they participate in bitterness, they will abhor family worship.<sup>13</sup>
3. **Do not make it so long that the children despise the time it takes.** Better have it short and sweet, vital and satisfying, so their appetites hunger for more. Always finish before they want you to.
4. **Let all participate and become involved.** Those that can read should take turns in reading as well as in praying. Even the little ones can say a few words in prayer, if they cannot read. Teach songs in which all take part. Take time for discussion, answering questions, solving problems, and self-expression. Children, especially, are inquisitive and want to know.
5. **Do not spend time criticizing or gossiping.** There is nothing that will sour the environment more than tearing something or someone apart. This is not time to air church problems except for matters of prayer. Remember it is worship time.
6. **Let the children that are old enough conduct family worship sometimes, either in whole or in part.** Let them do it their way and express themselves. It will create interest in it for them. This is also a good way to develop them spiritually and in self-confidence. They should be encouraged in what they do or say and not belittled.
7. **Have family worship when it is most convenient for all.** Supper time is usually best, before the various activities of the evening begin.<sup>14</sup>

### III. Practical Examples and Methods for Inspiring Family Worship

- 1. Small section Bible reading.** Rather than reading a whole chapter from the Bible at a time, which may be quite long and hard to retain, do just a paragraph or story a day. Let all family members suggest a title to the paragraph according to its content. Let each one list some things they observe in the paragraph, such as places, people, things, special words, meanings, applications, insights, etc. This can be great fun for children and a real challenge for all. It is like observing things in a room or on an automobile ride. When you have gone through the paragraph like that, then investigate spiritual lessons that may be learned. Let each one make it personal and tell what they have learned for themselves.
  
- 2. The miracles of Christ.** You could do one a night and learn something about Christ from each miracle and especially let each member learn something. Study the miracle as to where it was, the occasion, what happened, who was involved, and then lessons and applications.
  
- 3. Bible characters.** This can be a different kind of study for the sake of variety. Read about the character in the Bible and study his/her weaknesses and strengths. Discuss how you may learn something from the individual. See yourself in Bible characters and learn many practical lessons.
  
- 4. Bible doctrine.** Everyone should know the basic doctrines of the Bible. All family members should be grounded in the truth. You could find the doctrines by means of a good concordance or perhaps from a book on basic doctrines of the Bible.
  
- 5. Bible book study.** Select a book of the Bible appropriate for your children's

ages and have each family member read 2-3 verses as you go around the room. You can read anywhere from 1-2 chapters to an entire book, such as Ruth or Philippians, each night. Let the children help choose what book of the Bible to read. Older children can find out its theme, major divisions, lessons, key chapters, and ideas, etc.

- 6. Great chapters of the Bible.<sup>15</sup>** One can go through a Bible book chapter-by-chapter. Reading a chapter a day could be done if the children are not too young so they can comprehend it. Learn the key verse in the chapter, get the key word, and break the chapter down into its paragraph parts to find the structure of the chapter. You can also study special promises, see how Christ is seen, look at important doctrine in the chapter, study what sins should be avoided, what things a person should do, and what lessons can be learned.
  
- 7. Major verses.** This is a good method for variety. Take one verse a night for a period of time and scrutinize it as to what it means for each individual. For example, you might take a series of verses on great promises in the Bible, such as on prayer, salvation, victorious living, or Christ's second coming. Try to memorize the verse.
  
- 8. Scripture memorization program.** Even a 3-4 year old can learn ten verses if you select the right ones, and by the time a child is five years old, he can learn Psalm 23. Try it, make it fun, and you will be amazed at what your family can accomplish!
  
- 9. Devotional books for appropriate age levels.** These books are available in most bookstores including ABC Bookstores. They are written for various age levels. Children enjoy these and find them very interesting. Discernment needs to be used in selecting titles. Think about its relevancy to every age group.

10. **Bible games.** These can be very interesting and add challenge to family worship. They can be appealing to youth and keep family worship from being boring. Use Bible games that teach a lesson and from which you may learn something helpful for Christian living.
11. **Map study.** The understanding of salvation can be enhanced by an awareness of Biblical geography. Children might enjoy learning where certain countries, rivers, and mountains are; what happened there, such as the law on Mt. Sinai, crossing the Red Sea, and Christ walking on the water. Show them where these things took place and draw some lessons from it.
12. **Pictures or Videos.** This is a wonderful way to interest children. Many Bible story books have lots of pictures in them that tell a story for the child. This makes the Bible come alive. Use videos that cover Bible events, such as the Exodus or the life of Jesus; use nature videos to show the greatness of God; or use videos of great heroes of faith such as Martin Luther, John Huss, and others to be inspired by their commitment to and love for Jesus.
13. **Object lessons.** Visual aids of all kinds can be used. Be creative and use whatever object you have handy to teach a Bible truth. Christ readily used object lessons, such as the sheep and goats, rocks, water in the well of Samaria, etc. There is no end to object lessons.
14. **Read or listen to short biographies of godly servants of Jesus,** missionaries, evangelists, and pastors are a few examples.
15. **Singing.** You should always sing if possible. Have a songbook for each family member or project the song on the wall. You could also use sites like YouTube and GodVine to find songs to sing along with. Learn great hymns of the faith. You can also teach from the songs as there are stories behind the hymns if you investigate them. There are many books that will tell you the history and meaning of songs. Some great songs are found in the Bible such as the Psalms and Ephesians 5:19.
16. **Sermons.** Listen to sermons of famous preachers/evangelists/teachers on CD or the internet. You can even find sermons for children online. The Lord can use His preached Word in the lives of each family member.
17. **Small groups.** Groups should discuss the Bible story under consideration, then come up with practical ideas of how it applies to life today. The main idea is to learn about God, the Gospel and Godly living.

## Conclusion

Anything you do is better than nothing. Be intentional about family worship on a consistent basis. Make it interesting, practical, Christ centered, relevant, and participatory for all.

There will be some common challenges to family worship such as different ages of the children, children that are very young, one parent is “less committed”, parents don’t feel competent to teach the Bible, and children who are resistant or opposed to family worship. But the more you show your love and commitment to Jesus and the more you live the ideals of the Christian life, the more the children will be interested. There is no substitute for you and your life making the greatest impression on your children.

Finally pray for your children and family. Leave them in the hands of God and He will take care of them. “By sincere, earnest prayer parents should make a hedge about their children. They should pray with full faith that God will abide with them and that holy angels will guard them and their children from Satan’s cruel power.”<sup>16</sup> One man told me that he prayed and fasted for his children and grandchildren

every day and claimed them for Jesus. Today all of them are walking with the Lord.

**THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON IS  
POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE  
JAMES 5:16**

**Notes**

- 1 Ellen G. White. *Testimonies to Church* Vol 7 (1902, Pacific Press), 42.
- 2 See Acts 2:42-47. "In all of the Valuegenesis research projects, family helping projects or altruistic activities have been seen as a significant statistical factor in building both a rich and growing faith life and building loyalty to the Seventh-day Adventist church." *Valuegenesis<sup>3</sup> Update*, Issues no 4: 2012, 5. hwicedu.adventistfaith.org/assests/40045. Accessed March 31, 2014.
- 3 George Barna. *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Regal Books, 2003), 77.
- 4 Ibid., 78.
- 5 S. Joseph Kidder. *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Review & Herald, 2011), 128.
- 6 2009 Congregations Study for the North American Division www.cye.org/icm/projects/reports. Accessed March 30, 2014.
- 7 Kidder, 128.
- 8 Seven pastor's families, seven teacher's families, and seven families of lay members.
- 9 George Barna. *Grow Your Church from the Outside In: Understand the Unchurched and How to Reach Them* (Regal Books, Rev Ed, 2002), 45.
- 10 George Barna. *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture* (Regal Books, 2001), 113.
- 11 Jerry W. Lee, Gail T. Rice, and V Bailey Gillespie. "Family Worship Pattern and Their Correlations with Adolescent Behavior and Beliefs", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1997, 36(3), 373-381.
- 12 White, 43.
- 13 On page 43 of Volume 7 of *Testimonies to the Church*, White says, "The father, or, in his absence, the mother, should conduct the worship, selecting a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood. The service should be short. When a long chapter is read and a long prayer offered, the service is made wearisome, and at its close a sense of relief is felt. God is dishonored when the hour of worship is made dry and irksome, when it is so tedious, so lacking in interest, that the children dread it."
- 14 White also notes, "In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast is broken, to thank the heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and to ask Him for His help and guidance and watch care during the day! How fitting, also, when evening comes, for parents and children to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day that is past!" 7T, 43.
- 15 Some examples of "Great Chapters" include, Genesis 1, Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 23, Isaiah 53, Matthew 24, John 3, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 13, Hebrews 11, and Revelation 22.
- 16 White, 43.

# Guiding Principles For Sabbath Observance

MAY-ELLEN COLON

The principles below are based on God's character, and they provide a foundation for our Sabbath rules/practices. God will help us to reflect and live His character as we translate these principles into actions. What better day to reflect on His nature than on Sabbath—the day above all days!

## Principle 1: Preparing

Sabbath keeping means preparing for this special day so we can enjoy its benefits (see Hebrews 4:11; Exodus 16:28-30; Luke 23:54-56).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 1 is based:*

God is a preparer. He prepared the beautiful Garden of Eden and the plan of salvation before He created humankind and the Sabbath (see Genesis 1-2; Proverbs 8:27-31; 1 Peter 1:20); He has prepared an inheritance for the redeemed, the kingdom prepared since creation (see Matthew 25:34); He has prepared a place for us—a custom-made home in heaven (see John 14:1-3); He will prepare the Holy City as a bride adorned for her husband (see Revelation 21:2).

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## Principle 2: Resting

Sabbath keeping means resting from work, life's burdens, and secular concerns and distractions—one of the purposes for which God gave us the gift of the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:28-30; 20:9-10; 23:12; 34:21; Nehemiah 13:15-22; Jeremiah 17:27; Luke 23:54-56).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 2 is based:*

God is the epitome of rest. "My soul finds rest in God alone" (Psalm 62:1, NIV). Through Jesus, God offers rest to all who come to Him (see Matthew 11:28). Jesus Himself rested on Sabbath after He worked all week creating the earth (see Genesis 2:1).

## Principle 3: Renewing

Sabbath keeping means observing the day in a manner that renews us physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially since our loving Creator provided the Sabbath vacation for our welfare (Mark 2:27). This produces a sense of well-being that lowers stress (Matthew 11:29-30).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 3 is based:*

God is a restorer of our being—"He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:3, NIV) He exudes renewal, (see Psalm 103:5; Matthew 11:29-30; Isaiah 40:31; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

## **Principle 4: Healing**

Sabbath keeping means observing the day in such a way as to foster healing, relief, release, liberation, and refreshment. Any action that hurts oneself or others is Sabbath-breaking. (Isaiah 58; Matthew 12:9-15; Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:38-39; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; and John 9).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 4 is based:*

God is a healer (see Exodus 15:26; Psalm 103:3; 147:3; Matthew 4:23; Acts 10:38). He has “healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2, NKJV). God the Son announced that His mission is to restore sight to the blind and to release the oppressed (see Isaiah 61; Luke 4:18, 19).

## **Principle 5: Celebrating**

Sabbath keeping means celebrating the creation, or birthday, of the world (see Genesis 2:1-3), and of our redemption (see Deuteronomy 5:15). So its atmosphere should be one of celebration, joy, and delight (see Psalm 92; Isaiah 58:13).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 5 is based:*

God celebrates and rejoices. He celebrated creation (see Genesis 2:1-3; Proverbs 8:27-31). He rejoices when people come to him (see Deuteronomy 30:9; Isaiah 62:5; Zephaniah 3:17; Luke 15). He will celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-9). He is a source of joy (see Psalm 43:4). Speaking of God, David said, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11, NKJV). “‘You will find your joy in the LORD’ ” (Isaiah 58:14, NIV).

## **Principle 6: Sanctifying**

Sabbath-keeping means keeping the Sabbath day holy—setting it apart for a special focus on God, His Word, and His agenda, to seek intimacy with Him, embrace Him wholly, and nurture a love relationship with Him that makes us holy.

(see Exodus 20:8; 31:13; Isaiah 58:13; Ezekiel 20:12). This nurtures our “vertical” relationship—our relationship with God.

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 6 is based:*

God is holy (see Leviticus 11:44; 19:2), personal and loving (see 1 John 4:8), and He seeks intimacy and special time with His family (see John 15:15; Revelation 3:20). He sanctifies, or makes holy, the Sabbath and His people (see Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11; 31:13).

## **Principle 7: Remembering**

Sabbath keeping means remembering, reflecting, and rejoicing about the Creation of the world (see Exodus 20:11), redemption from sin (see Deuteronomy 5:15; Luke 4:16-19), and Christ’s second coming and the creation of the new earth (see Isaiah 66:22, 23).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 7 is based:*

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God remembers and reflects on important happenings. For example, He paused to reflect on His accomplishments at creation (see Genesis 1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11). He remembers His covenants with humanity (see Genesis 9:15, 16; Leviticus 26:42, 45).

## **Principle 8: Worshipping**

Sabbath keeping means participating in corporate, focused worship of God with our church family (see Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 56:1-8; 66:22, 23; Mark 1:21; 3:1-4; Luke 4:16; 13:10; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 14:7). This nurtures both our “vertical” and our “horizontal” relationships—those with God and with our fellow human beings.

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 8 is based:*

God desires corporate worship (see Isaiah 66:22, 23). Jesus attended and led out in worship services while on earth (see Luke 4:16).

## **Principle 9: Basking**

Sabbath keeping means enjoying, studying, experiencing, and basking in the world God made, rather than working at maintaining it (see Psalms 92:4, 5; 111:2-4; compare Romans 1:20).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 9 is based:*

God is Creator, and He appreciates His creation—He considered it all “very good” (Genesis 1:31, NIV). At creation, God was filled with satisfaction, rejoicing “in his whole world and delighting in mankind” (Proverbs. 8:31, NIV).

## **Principle 10: Responding**

Sabbath-keeping is a joyful human response to God’s grace in obedience to His loving command to remember Him and His Sabbath gift (see John 14:15). It is not meant to be a means of earning our salvation (see Romans 3:20; Hebrews 4:9, 10). We respond to God’s gift of rest by working for Him in His strength and for His glory (see Exodus 20:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Hebrews 13:20, 21).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 10 is based:*

Love motivated Jesus’ keeping of His Father’s commandments (see John 15:10).

## **Principle 11: Trusting**

Sabbath-keeping means trusting God to take care of what we leave undone during the hours of the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:14-30; 20:10; Psalm 5:11, 12; Matthew 6:33). It means learning to depend on God rather than on ourselves.

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 11 is based:*

Jesus trusted His Father no matter how much Satan tempted Him to do otherwise (see Luke 4:1-13). He demonstrated this trusting attitude as He suffered for our Salvation (see Matthew 26:39; Luke 23:46).

## **Principle 12: Fellowshipping**

Sabbath-keeping means nurturing our relationships with family and friends (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1). In the gift of the Sabbath, God provides time for focused fellowship with the whole family—even the family animals (see Exodus 20:8-11). Sabbath and family go together (see Genesis 1:1-2:25; Leviticus 19:3). This nurtures our “horizontal” relationships—those with our fellow human beings.

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 12 is based:*

The members of the Godhead are relational (see John 15:15). God’s relationship with us is the foundation of our relationship with each other (see John 13:34, 35; 17:20-23). Jesus fellowshipped with others on Sabbath (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1).

## **Principle 13: Affirming**

Sabbath-keeping means rightly representing the atmosphere of the Sabbath by a spirit of acceptance, love, and affirmation rather than a spirit of judgment and criticism (see John 7:24).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 13 is based:*

God is accepting, loving, and affirming (see Matthew 11:28; John 3:16; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:3-10; Revelation 22:17).

## **Principle 14: Serving**

Sabbath-keeping means serving other people in love and witnessing lovingly for God (see Isaiah 58: 7-10; Matthew 12:12; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 13:12, 16).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 14 is based:*

Jesus is a Servant and Proclaimer of the Good News (see Luke 4:18-21; Philippians 2:5-11). He went about doing good (see Acts 10:38).

## Principle 15: Caring

Sabbath-keeping means caring for necessary physical needs on Sabbath; no creature—animal or human—should be allowed to suffer on this day (see Exodus 23:12; Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:27).

*Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 15 is based:*

God supplies all our needs, all the time (see Exodus 16:26, 35; Joshua 5:12; Matthew 6:25-33; John 5:16, 17; Philippians 4:19), and He advocates that we care for the needs of all His creatures (Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5).

### THOUGHT QUESTION:

A principle is a standard that may be applied to more than one type of situation. What rules for

Sabbath practices can you derive from the above guiding principles?

TEACH ME YOUR WAYS, O LORD,  
THAT I MAY LIVE ACCORDING TO YOUR  
TRUTH! GRANT ME PURITY OF HEART,  
THAT I MAY HONOR YOU. WITH ALL MY  
HEART I WILL PRAISE YOU, O LORD,  
MY GOD. I WILL GIVE GLORY TO YOUR  
NAME FOREVER, FOR YOUR LOVE FOR  
ME IS VERY GREAT  
Ps 86:11-13(NLT)

### Reference

Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *Right from Wrong: What You Need to Know to Help Youth Make Right Choices*. (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 1994), p. 96.