



2015
PLANBOOK



REVIVAL & REFORMATION

BUILDING FAMILY MEMORIES

— ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER —



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Preface

A few months ago we celebrated 30 years of being married to each other. Thirty years is a long time. However, it seems like it was just yesterday we were exchanging marriage vows on a sunny afternoon in August at the Seventh-day Adventist Village Church in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, in the United States of America.

After two children, eight living spaces, eleven ministry assignments and several countries on every continent of the world, we have many memories to fill several books and several days of conversation with anyone interested in that kind of musing.

Memories—good memories—are most important for humans to live with a measure of satisfaction and anticipation. Children need good memories with their families of origin (father, mother, siblings, etc.) to feel connected and live with a modicum of confidence and balance.

Most important in creating good memories for posterity is the need to give our children a spiritual foundation and security in a God that is loving, kind, forgiving and has made provision for their salvation through His son Jesus Christ.

Moses wrote under inspiration “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your

children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Ellen White counsels in *The Adventist Home*, p. 190: “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.”

Recent research in neurobiology called *Hardwired to Connect* also identifies ‘close connections to other people and deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning’ as the most important kinds of connectedness children need to thrive.

It is our sincere desire that the resources in this volume, will aid pastors and ministry leaders in their work with families in and out of the church; serving as a catalyst for **Building Family Memories** of joy that will help families to be ready for the coming of Jesus Christ.

For stronger and healthier families,

Elaine and Willie Oliver, Directors
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How to Use This Planbook

The Family Ministries Planbook is an annual resource organized by the General Conference Family Ministries department with input from the world field to supply local churches around the world with resources for the special family emphases weeks and Sabbaths.

VI

Christian Home and Marriage Week: February 7-14

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

Christian Marriage Day: Sabbath, February 7, (Emphasizes Marriage)

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

Christian Home Day: Sabbath, February 14, (Emphasizes Parenting)

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

Family Togetherness Week: September 6-12

Family Togetherness Week is scheduled the second week in September, beginning with the second Sunday and ending on the following Sabbath with Family Togetherness Day. Family Togetherness Week and Family Togetherness Day highlight celebrating the church as a family.

Family Togetherness Day: Sabbath, September 12 (Emphasizes the Church Family)

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

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

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

SERMONS

Building Lasting Memories

ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER

The Texts

Song of Solomon 2:7; 4:7; 8:7; 1:2

I CHARGE YOU, O DAUGHTERS OF
JERUSALEM BY THE GAZELLES OR BY THE
DOES OF THE FIELD, DO NOT STIR UP
NOR AWAKEN LOVE UNTIL IT PLEASES.
v. 2:7

YOU ARE ALL FAIR, MY LOVE, AND THERE
IS NO SPOT IN YOU. v. 4:7

MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE,
NOR CAN THE FLOODS DROWN IT. IF A
MAN WOULD GIVE FOR LOVE ALL THE
WEALTH OF HIS HOUSE, IT WOULD BE
UTTERLY DESPISED. v. 8:7

LET HIM KISS ME WITH THE KISSES OF
HIS MOUTH—FOR YOUR LOVE IS BETTER
THAN WINE. v. 1:2

Introduction

To celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary a few months ago, we spent five days at the beach. We love beach vacations. Especially where there is beautiful fine sand and clear blue water.

.....

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Our time together was simply incredible. We relaxed, caught up on some reading, ate food we didn't cook, enjoyed swimming and snorkeling, body-boarding and kayaking. While there was much to enjoy, our favorite lasting memory was learning to sail.

As soon as our sailing lesson began, we realized there was much more complexity to this sport than appeared on the surface. It was at once stressful and relaxing, challenging and rewarding. We quickly realized we would need to work together as a team and be on the same side of the catamaran (sail boat) if we were to experience gliding smoothly across the beautiful waters.

God created marriage so that human beings would have an opportunity to build lasting memories, leaving a legacy onto the third and fourth generations. While the process has challenging moments, the rewards are out of this world.

Our sermon today is titled, *Building Lasting Memories*, let us pray.

The Reality of Marriage and Its Problems

We still remember our honeymoon as if it were yesterday. While we could only spend a few days at the beach because of our budget, we had a fantastic time. Not that everything was flawless.

Nevertheless, we were finally married after dating long distance for a year. Life felt settled, serene and still. We were now ready to face the rest of our lives together.

Although just married for twenty-four hours, we knew we would be fine as long as we were together. We loved each other, and nothing and no one could disturb our harmony. We had arrived at a place of contentment and satisfaction in our lives.

But is it possible within the domain of human capacity to keep love always sheltered from injury or hurt? And even if we could, is *love*—we are talking about the romantic feelings and ecstasy of early marriage—enough to sustain a marriage? The answer in our opinion is no.

The Meaning of Love

What is love, after all? It seems to be the catch-all in relationships. We fall in love and fall out of love. But is that really what love is?

These days the word *love* seems to be used to refer to all kinds of situations. We hear people say: “I love apple pie,” or “I love to exercise every day,” or “I love to nap after lunch,” or “I love to cook and bake,” or “I love to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.” It is amazing how love is used in language to convey people’s affinity to something or an activity.

We propose it is probably one of the reasons we have such difficulty in marriage. For if you love your husband or wife the way you love to eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich; or the way you love to exercise or cook and bake, it is a bit problematic, and chances are it won’t make your marriage a success. Consequently, we must come to grips with the true meaning of love; at the very least, come to terms with what role God meant for love to play in our marriage relationships.

Love in the Song of Solomon

The Song of Solomon provides us with a sequence of snapshots of the relationship between a man and a woman. The ecstasy and complexity that convey what love—*real love*—is all about.

LIKE GEN. 2:23–25, THE SONG CELEBRATES GOD’S GIFT OF BODILY LOVE BETWEEN MAN AND

WOMAN. HERE THE CREATOR’S WISDOM AND BOUNTY ARE DISPLAYED. THUS, THE SONG IS BEST TAKEN AS AN EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL’S WISDOM POETRY (CP. PROV. 5:15–20; 6:24–29; 7:6–27; 30:18–20). LIKE MANY PSALMS THAT PRAISE GOD AND ALSO TEACH, THE SONG’S MAIN PURPOSE IS TO CELEBRATE RATHER THAN TO INSTRUCT. (VAN LEEUWEN, 2003).

Song of Solomon 2:7 states: “Oh, let me warn you, sisters in Jerusalem, by the gazelles, yes, by all the wild deer: Don’t excite love, don’t stir it up, until the time is ripe—and you are ready.” (The Message)

THE MEANING OF THE REFRAIN IS THAT LOVE CANNOT BE FORCED BUT MUST BE PATIENTLY WAITED FOR. IN OTHER WORDS, THE BELOVED REMINDED ALL THOSE DESIRING A RELATIONSHIP LIKE THE ONE SHE AND SOLOMON ENJOYED WAITING PATIENTLY FOR GOD TO BRING IT INTO THEIR LIVES. GAZELLES (2:17; CF. V. 17; 3:5; 4:5; 7:3; 8:14) AND DOES ARE GRACEFUL, AGILE ANIMALS. IT WAS NATURAL FOR A BELOVED ONE, THINKING OF THE FIELDS AND FORESTS (2:1, 3), TO MAKE AN OATH BY MOUNTAIN ANIMALS. (DEERE, 1985).

The message is clear. Love—the love God wants us to experience in relationships—is so delightful, so magnificent, so superb, He wants us to be truly ready for it—spiritually, physically, financially, emotionally—or we will just mess things up. Beware of puppy love; it will lead to a dog’s life.

The Song of Solomon, originally written in Hebrew, has at least three words for our English word love. The first word we share is *rayah*; which is literally translated *friend* or *companion*—somebody with whom you enjoy hanging out. Song of Solomon 4:7 says: “You are beautiful from head to toe, my dear love, beautiful beyond compare, absolutely flawless.” (The Message)

SOLOMON SUMMARIZED HIS PRAISE BY ASCRIBING PERFECT BEAUTY TO HIS BRIDE. SHE HAD NO FLAW, OR PHYSICAL DEFECT. SHE WAS PERFECT IN

APPEARANCE. (LATER SHE CALLED HIM “MY FLAWLESS ONE,” 5:2.) SOLOMON PRAISED EIGHT PARTS OF HIS BRIDE’S BODY... COMPARED WITH THIS LAVISH PRAISE OF THE BELOVED’S BEAUTY, SOME WIVES TODAY MAY FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT THEIR APPEARANCE. HOWEVER, ONE MUST REMEMBER THAT INITIALLY THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM DID NOT SEEM TO REGARD THE BELOVED AS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. UNLIKE THE OTHER ROYAL LADIES SHE WAS NOT FAIR-SKINNED, A PREEMINENT SIGN OF BEAUTY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (SEE COMMENTS ON 1:5–6). YET IN HER LOVER’S EYES SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL, EVEN THOUGH SHE DID NOT MEET THE OBJECTIVE STANDARDS OF BEAUTY IN HER SOCIETY... THOUGH FEW PEOPLE IN ANY AGE MEET THEIR PARTICULAR CULTURE’S STANDARD OF BEAUTY, A WOMAN IS BEAUTIFUL IN THE EYES OF HER LOVER SIMPLY BECAUSE HE LOVES HER. EVERY HUSBAND WHO GENUINELY LOVES HIS WIFE CAN SAY, “TO ME YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND THERE IS NO FLAW IN YOU.” (DEERE, 1985).

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We love to spend time together. Married for over 30 years now and having the privilege of working together—it is not for the faint of heart—we have all kinds of favorite things, activities and places. We have favorite restaurants, favorite parks, favorite museums, favorite beaches, favorite cities, favorite malls, favorite zoos (the Serengeti), favorite flowers, favorite meals and many more than we have already shared. We are simply grateful God brought us together, and we try to celebrate that reality every day. I (Willie) think Elaine is absolutely beautiful. Now, to others she may not be all that. They may not see what I see. But to me, there is none better. I am talking about inside and out. She is mine, and she is beautiful!

Working with couples and families is gratifying to us. It is hard work, but it is rewarding work. However, after spending a weekend on our feet speaking at a couples’ retreat, or spending several days training pastors or church leaders, one of our favorite things to do is to find a good Indian restaurant to have a meal together. While we try

to be temperate and careful, we simply enjoy food and find it a reason to celebrate God and life while eating a great meal of chana masala, baigan bharta, dal makhani—rice, of course—and tandoori roti. The truth is, it is simply about hanging out with each other and enjoying each other’s company. It is all about the *rayah* love.

Another Hebrew word for love is *’ahabah*, which is much deeper and reflective than temporary amorous feelings. We are talking about more than a short-lived desire or lust for another person—perhaps someone you see from a distance on the street or in the grocery store you happen to think is attractive. *’Ahabah* is making a conscious choice to join your life to the life of another person. It is an emotion that guides you to commitment—a relationship that is priceless. Song of Solomon 8:7 declares: “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.”

THE FINAL STATEMENT ABOUT THE LOVE DEPICTED IN THE SONG IS THAT IT IS PRICELESS. ALL ONE’S WEALTH WOULD BE TOTALLY INADEQUATE TO PURCHASE SUCH LOVE. IN FACT, SUCH MONEY WOULD BE ... SCORNE, BECAUSE LOVE CANNOT BE BOUGHT. ANY ATTEMPT TO “BUY” LOVE DEPERSONALIZES IT. IF LOVE IS PRICELESS, HOW THEN CAN IT BE OBTAINED? THE ANSWER IS THAT IT MUST BE GIVEN. AND ULTIMATELY LOVE IS A GIFT FROM GOD. (DEERE, 1985).

The notion of *’ahabah*—love as commitment—is an important one, often missed in marriage, to our demise. It is a concept we need to give much more attention to if we are going to be able to be involved in *building lasting memories* in our respective marriages.

Scott Stanley, a leading marriage and family researcher in the United States, suggests there are two faces of commitment we should consider: dedication and constraint. Personal *dedication* refers to the desire of an individual to maintain or improve the quality of his or her relationship for the joint benefit of the marriage. It is demonstrated by a desire to not only remain in the marriage,

but also to make it better, to sacrifice for it, to invest in it, to link personal goals to it, and to seek the spouse's happiness, not simply one's own. On the other hand, *constraint* commitment refers to forces that compel individuals to preserve their marriage regardless of their personal *dedication* to it. *Constraint* may come from either external or internal pressures, and they favor relationship stability by seeing the end of their marriage as more economically, socially, personally or psychologically costly. If *dedication* is low, *constraint* can keep people in relationships they might otherwise want to leave. (Stanley 2005, pp. 23, 24).

Because we are human, we make mistakes, even in our marriage, and unless we have commitment love in our relationships—the *'ahabah* factor—it would be impossible to sustain a marriage and build lasting memories for the future. For marriage to thrive, we need to have *dedication* and *constraint*.

The third Hebrew word for love found in the Song of Songs is the word *dod*, which is translated in English as to carouse, to rock or to fondle. *Dod* is the physical, sexual ingredient of a relationship, as exemplified in Song of Solomon 1:2, which states: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—For your love is better than wine”.

THE SONG BEGINS WITH A SOLILOQUY BY THE BELOVED IN WHICH SHE FIRST EXPRESSED HER STRONG DESIRE FOR HER LOVER'S. . . PHYSICAL AFFECTION. . . THE RAPID INTERCHANGE BETWEEN THE THIRD PERSON (HIM, V. 2A, AND HIS, VV. 2A, 4B) AND THE SECOND PERSON (YOUR AND YOU, VV. 2B–4A) IS CONFUSING TO MODERN READERS, BUT IT WAS A REGULAR FEATURE OF LOVE POETRY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST. THIS STYLISTIC DEVICE GAVE A STRONG EMOTIONAL QUALITY TO THE POETRY. WHEN SHE SPOKE OF HIS LOVE (V. 2B) SHE WAS REFERRING TO THE PHYSICAL EXPRESSIONS OF HIS LOVE (THE HEB. WORD FOR “LOVE” IS THE PL. DŌDĪM, ALSO USED IN 4:10). THE STATEMENT YOUR LOVE IS MORE DELIGHTFUL THAN WINE MEANS THAT HIS PHYSICAL AFFECTIONS WERE EXHILARATING, REFRESHING, AND A GREAT SOURCE OF JOY (CF. 1:4). (DEERE, 1985).

In 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 the Bible states:

NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY, LET EACH MAN HAVE HIS OWN WIFE, AND LET EACH WOMAN HAVE HER OWN HUSBAND. LET THE HUSBAND RENDER TO HIS WIFE THE AFFECTION DUE HER, AND LIKEWISE ALSO THE WIFE TO HER HUSBAND. THE WIFE DOES NOT HAVE AUTHORITY OVER HER OWN BODY, BUT THE HUSBAND DOES. AND LIKEWISE THE HUSBAND DOES NOT HAVE AUTHORITY OVER HIS OWN BODY, BUT THE WIFE DOES. DO NOT DEPRIVE ONE ANOTHER EXCEPT WITH CONSENT FOR A TIME, THAT YOU MAY GIVE YOURSELVES TO FASTING AND PRAYER; AND COME TOGETHER AGAIN SO THAT SATAN DOES NOT TEMPT YOU BECAUSE OF YOUR LACK OF SELF-CONTROL.

God wants our marriages to experience the flames of *rayah*, *'ahabah* and *dod*, not for our marriages to be consumed, but for our marriages to be able to *build lasting memories* for the future, so we can impact to the third and fourth generations of our lineage. One flame burning all by itself, will never accomplish the connection, commitment, and passion God wants each of us to enjoy in marriage, so we'll experience, joy, peace, satisfaction and security.

How many marriages in our church have you witnessed where all the flames of love are burning as one? When we separate the flames, that love can never truly create a rewarding and fulfilling marital experience. It's like living outside the framework God designed and wired us to live by.

Conclusion

Why is it that life changes after the honeymoon? What happens to our love that was so strong and true? If we stop to think about the matter, we realize no one can sustain the fantasy of a honeymoon. Think about it! We are often in a beautiful place away from home where someone else is making the beds, cooking the food and washing the towels. We have enough clean clothes for the trip, so we don't need to do laundry. We can sleep late, get up late, and do almost anything we wish.

When real life sets in, things change. And the real challenge of being responsible—washing clothes, cooking meals, paying bills, working long hours, going to sleep at a reasonable time so you can wake up on time to get to work become a reality. Living with reality, where from time to time you or your spouse might be less than mature or responsible, is the kind of situation that knocks the wind out of your marriage, because the flames of *nayah*, *'ababab*, and *dod* may no longer be burning as brightly as they once were. We get careless and it becomes difficult to build lasting memories for the future.

Illustration

Several years ago when we were on safari in the Serengeti we came upon a pride of lions in the middle of the savanna. Our driver stopped, and our guide spoke up and said: “There are lions over there.” We didn’t see the lions and asked: “Where are the lions?” The guide pointed and said: “The lions are right over there.” We still couldn’t see the lions until one of them stood on all fours. Then we could see the lions. We quickly noted the reason we could not see the lion. The lion’s mane and the grass of the savanna were the same color. To be able to see the lions we needed to look carefully to intentionally distinguish the grass from the lions.

The Bible states in 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” We like the clarity that comes from The Message paraphrase: “Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping.”

The reality is, every human marriage will fail to meet the standard needed to preserve a *building lasting memories* attitude in the home. It is on this note that Ellen White declares:

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST ALONE CAN
MAKE MEN AND WOMEN HAPPY. ALL THE

COMMON WATERS OF LIFE CHRIST CAN
TURN INTO THE WINE OF HEAVEN. THE
HOME THEN BECOMES AS AN EDEN BLISS;
THE FAMILY, A BEAUTIFUL SYMBOL OF THE
FAMILY IN HEAVEN. (WHITE 1952, P. 28).

To be *building lasting memories* for the future in our respective marriages then, we need the presence of Christ to make us accepting, affectionate, appreciative, attentive, calm, caring, compassionate, considerate, committed, dedicated, devoted, dutiful, enthusiastic, faithful, friendly, gentle, intentional, kind, loyal, passionate, patient, perceptive, sympathetic, self-controlled, supportive, tender, thoughtful, and understanding. These attributes and actions can only be accomplished as we depend on the power of God each day.

May we daily invite God into our lives and marriages, so we will be granted the power and grace for building lasting memories.

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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

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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.

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 WORSHIPED.

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. Krickitt 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 reasons 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.

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 1 5:4

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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Lessons From The Family Of Abraham

JONGIMPI PAPU

Introduction

It is true that Bible stories tend to focus on achievements by individuals rather than of groups of people or families. Hebrews 11 reflects on a list of individuals who by faith pleased God. Little is said of their families. A closer look at these individuals, however, reveals a subtext of support from their families. The ministry of Moses was launched not so much by the faith of Moses but the faith of his parents who, not fearing the King's command, hid him.

We may extol the virtues of Abraham and rightly so, he is known as the father of the faithful, but this should not lead us to think of Abraham as a *Lone Ranger*. What we may forget is that Abraham was a supportive and loving father to Isaac, a faithful and loving husband to Sarah and a good master to his servants. It was through this small and intimate circle that all families of the earth were to be blessed in Abraham.

The assignment given to Abraham was not to bless all nations but to be a blessing in his family. The following text gives a specific mandate to Abraham and it is through the faithful fulfillment of this mandate that Abraham became a blessing to all families of the earth:

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The Text

FOR I HAVE KNOWN HIM (ABRAHAM),
 IN ORDER THAT HE MAY COMMAND HIS
 CHILDREN AND HIS HOUSEHOLD AFTER
 HIM, THAT THEY KEEP THE WAY OF THE
 LORD, TO DO RIGHTEOUSNESS AND
 JUSTICE...

GENESIS 18:19

Why Abraham was Chosen

The text is very clear on the purpose for the choosing of Abraham. The phrase “for I have known him...” is translated ‘for I have chosen him’ in other Bible versions. In fact Amos 3:2 uses the same phrase where God refers to Israel as the only nation that He has known. It would be incorrect to suggest that God had only known Israel in a cognitive sense, but as far as purpose is concerned, the text makes sense. In other words, Israel is the only nation that God chose. The same applies to Abraham, he was chosen by God for a specific purpose.

The specific purpose was for Abraham to “command his children and household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice”. Abraham’s assignment was to his family and household and it was God’s assignment to ensure that all nations were blessed in him. His faithful discharge of his responsibility within his family would ensure that God’s plans, which included all nations, would be fulfilled.

Did Abraham fulfill the assignment?

This question is relevant, for we can learn lessons from Abraham not in just knowing that he had an assignment but in how he fared in the assignment. The lessons would be learned whether Abraham failed or succeeded for it is often from the results that we can draw lessons.

The area of Abraham's assignment or responsibility was confined rather to his children and household. So the question is, did Abraham command his children and his household after him? Looking at the life of Isaac, the answer is affirmative. Abraham was able to put Isaac on the altar of sacrifice with no remonstrations from his son. Ellen White offers the following on Isaac's response:

IT WAS WITH TERROR AND AMAZEMENT THAT ISAAC LEARNED HIS FATE, BUT HE OFFERED NO RESISTANCE. HE COULD HAVE ESCAPED HIS DOOM, HAD HE CHOSEN TO DO SO; THE GRIEF-STRICKEN OLD MAN, EXHAUSTED WITH THE STRUGGLE OF THOSE THREE TERRIBLE DAYS, COULD NOT HAVE OPPOSED THE WILL OF THE VIGOROUS YOUTH. BUT ISAAC HAD BEEN TRAINED FROM CHILDHOOD TO READY, TRUSTING OBEDIENCE...
(WHITE 1892, P. 152)

The question may be asked, how did Abraham manage to get a teenager to be willing to go on the altar of sacrifice? Some of us struggle to get our children to attend church let alone die on an altar. How did Abraham do it?

The assignment given to Abraham included his household as well and not only his children. Was he able to command his household after him to keep the ways of the Lord? Admittedly, instructing servants to keep the ways of the Lord could be more challenging than instructing your own children. It would be interesting to find out how many servants Abraham had in his household?

In Genesis 14:14 we are told that Abraham armed about 318 servants who were born in his own house. It is clear that not all the servants

were armed but only those born in his house. It could also be argued that the 318 were not the total number of servants born in his house but those he armed from those born in his house. We are not told anything about the children and wives of the servants. One may guess that Abraham could easily have had more than a thousand servants. It was to these servants that Abraham had to show the way of the Lord. What were the results? Did he succeed or did he fail?

When the time came for Isaac to have a wife, Abraham confided in one of his servants—the oldest—to do that very important task. It is interesting to note how the servant viewed the religion of his master, Abraham. In Genesis 24:35, the servant, out of his own personal testimony declared that the Lord had blessed Abraham immensely. His focus was not so much on how rich Abraham had become but who was behind the riches and this is not just what he was told to say but what he knew personally. Secondly, in verse 52 of the same chapter, we see the servant “bowing himself to the earth” and worshipping the Lord. This too was not part of the instruction. The servant worshipped the Lord out of his own heart and for the goodness of God he had experienced and witnessed himself.

So we can convincingly say that Abraham indeed succeeded in commanding his children and his household to keep the ways of the Lord. The question, we need to ask is how did he do it? This is where we learn the lesson that we can apply in our own lives. We ask this question because we realize the difficulty and the challenge inherent in the assignment given to Abraham. We also stand amazed at how well he fulfilled it. Here are the four lessons we can glean from the story of Abraham.

Relationship between the Parents and God

The relationship between Abraham and God and between Sarah and God is the first lesson we might learn from this family. Abraham obeyed God explicitly and without any hesitation. When he was asked to leave his homeland, he

did not delay or even raised excuses. When the Lord instructed him to sacrifice his son, even though that might not have made sense to him, he obeyed. He knew the voice that had spoken to Him even though he may not have clearly understood why he had to sacrifice his son instead of a lamb. This became a living template for Isaac and the servants. They learned to take God's voice seriously.

The assignment may have been given to Abraham but without Sarah's collaboration, it would have been very difficult for Abraham to carry it through. Sarah's life did not contradict the life and commitment of Abraham. We are told in Hebrews 11:17, that "by faith Abraham...offered up Isaac," but in the same vein we learn that "by faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age..." In the book of I Peter 3:6, Sarah is given as an example of the holy women who trusted God. Holiness is derived from a personal relationship with a holy God and not a relationship with a holy spouse. Sarah had a personal relationship with God.

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Isaac did not observe a discord between the life lived by Abraham and the one lived by Sarah. They were in unison and it was this that gave credibility to their lives. Abraham could only command their children and servants after themselves. It was not just the logic of the instruction but the commitment of the instructors that had an influence in the lives of Abraham's household.

I guess it was not difficult for Isaac to trust the choice his father made for him when it came to a life partner. Isaac's wife was not just Abraham's choice; that was God's choice. A child who is willing to die at the voice of a parent cannot find it difficult to trust the choice of the same. The seriousness in which parents take God's voice will determine how serious their children will take their parents' voice.

If we want to succeed in the assignment God has given to us in our families, we need as co-parents or as single parents to have an observable, consistent and growing relationship

with Christ. It is easy to preach in church but preaching at home is a challenge for that is where the rubber meets the road. It is in the home where our preaching can actually be challenged to a point of contradiction by our own actions. A consistent life does not need a long sermon or instruction; it fills the gap in the instruction and makes sense of it.

Relationship between the Father and the Mother

How the parents relate to each other can either be a blessing or a curse to the other members of the family. Sarah, we are told, adorned herself in being submissive to Abraham. This does not mean that Sarah was only a shadow of Abraham with no say or input in how things were done in the family. We know that in more than one occasion Sarah suggested to Abraham a solution to a crisis they faced as a family. She is the one who came up with the idea of Hagar as the solution to their childlessness. Sarah related to Abraham as her equal even though she is said to have submitted to him. Abraham respected and valued Sarah's opinion. She was not only seen but she was heard as well.

Abraham loved Sarah very much. We see this in Genesis 12:11 – where he alludes to the fact that Sarah was a beautiful woman. This was after they had been married for almost 35 years. It was not so much what people were saying about Sarah's beauty. Rather, it was Abraham's appreciation of the beauty of his wife: "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance." It is clear that even after being married to Sarah for several decades, Abraham would still have chosen her again and again. Sarah was still the most beautiful woman in Abraham's eyes. Abraham loved Sarah and that principle alone purifies the meaning of submission and elevates it from a cultural expectation to a Christian virtue.

How we relate to each other as husband and wife has a telling effect on how our children and those close to us will relate to God. Ellen White puts this more succinctly when she says:

THE BEST WAY TO EDUCATE CHILDREN TO RESPECT THEIR FATHER AND MOTHER IS TO GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY OF SEEING THE FATHER OFFERING KINDLY ATTENTIONS TO THE MOTHER, AND THE MOTHER RENDERING RESPECT AND REVERENCE TO THE FATHER. IT IS BY BEHOLDING LOVE IN THEIR PARENTS THAT CHILDREN ARE LED TO OBEY THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT...
(WHITE 1952B, P. 278).

The seeds of disobedience and rebellion are sown in the hearts of children when their parents treat each other disrespectfully and unkindly. Parents who are always at each other's throats do not only destroy each other but their own children as well. It would have been very difficult for Isaac to listen to a man (father) who had abused his own mother. Isaac could obey Abraham's voice for he (Abraham) demonstrated he had learned to obey God's voice by the way in which he related to his wife.

Relationship between Parents and their Children

The relationship between parents and their children must be intentional and deliberate. Developing a good character in our children cannot be a haphazard work. We learned that Isaac was trained from childhood; the character he developed was not just a coincidence or luck. The best way to train anyone is to show him or her how it is done and share why it is done that way. Both aspects of teaching are important. It is not enough for our children to imbibe the culture of their home but they must have reasons why such a culture is acceptable.

Isaac was not only an imitator of Abraham's faith; we are told that he was a sharer in his faith (White 1890, p. 152). The concept of sharer carries the idea of investment, of ownership of having shares in a company. One who has shares is more than just an employee following the rules and regulations of the company. He or she has the best interest of the company at heart and might even be willing to sacrifice time and resources when called upon to do so. Isaac was not dying for Abraham's faith but his own faith in God. It was also his personal faith in God that was tested.

Isaac was not just taught to know the tenets of his parent's faith; he was led to experience their faith. It was by experiencing this faith that it became his testimony. The same applied to the servants. Not only did they have a cognitive knowledge of God they had started their own walk with Him. Training cannot be judged to be effective until it has transformed the learner to a disciple, a follower and not just a 'knower'.

We need to give our children an opportunity to see us as parents trusting in God. Times of difficulty can provide a child with a learning environment; when they see first hand how their parents manifest trust in God. When children witness a miracle unfolding before their eyes and in their own families; their knowledge of God becomes experiential and not just theoretical. Our children can only stand up for a faith that is theirs. No one can die for a borrowed faith. Martyrdom is a choice not a requirement. The question is whether our children own their faith or are they just cultural Adventists.

Relationship with the Servants

How do we relate to those who depend on us for sustenance? In addition to seeing how Abraham related to his God, how he and Sarah related to each other, and how he treated his own child and also the servants had stories of how he related to them. They had witnessed Abraham's kindness and unselfishness when he allowed Lot to choose the best portion of the land. They had seen how God blessed Abraham, and I am sure they had stories that bordered on miracles on how God took care of Abraham and all that he had.

It is interesting to note that in the book of Ephesians, Paul touches on all the areas of our relationship, and challenges us in each area. In our walk with God, in how we relate to each other as husband and wife, in how we relate to our children and how we treat our servants. This is Christianity in 'overall.'

Conclusion

The lessons are there to be appropriated but where do we begin, you may ask. My response is in understanding the fundamental assignment God has give to us as parents, guardians, and

caregivers. Our assignment is not to be a blessing in the world but to command our children and household after us to keep the ways of the Lord. This assignment is confined, measureable and intimate. It is when this is done that the world can be blessed by our presence. Remember: “All His biddings are enablings” (White 1900, p. 333). God can never assign that which His power is unable to accomplish through us. We can do all things through Christ. Listen to the beat of this statement:

ONE WELL-ORDERED, WELL-DISCIPLINED
FAMILY TELLS MORE ON BEHALF OF
CHRISTIANITY THAN ALL THE SERMONS
THAT CAN BE PREACHED... SUCH A FAMILY
GIVES EVIDENCE THAT THE PARENTS HAVE
BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN FOLLOWING GOD'S
DIRECTIONS, AND THAT THEIR CHILDREN
WILL SERVE HIM IN THE CHURCH.
(WHITE 1952, P. 32)

Indeed the families of the earth will be blessed in such a family. May this be our prayer today.

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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).

"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

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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 founds 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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All Bible texts are from the New Revised Standard Version. (NRSV)

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What's Love Got To Do With It?

JEFFREY O. BROWN

Introduction

“Someone asked me the other day,” wrote Erma Bombeck (2003), America’s much-loved humorist, “if I had my life to live over would I change anything. My answer was no, but then I thought about it and changed my mind. If I had my life to live over again I would have talked less and listened more. Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy and complaining about the shadow over my feet, I’d have cherished every minute of it and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was to be my only chance in life to assist God in a miracle... I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded... I would have sat cross-legged on the lawn with my children and never worried about grass stains. I would have cried and laughed less while watching television ... and more while watching real life. When my child kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, ‘Later. Now, go get washed up for dinner.’ There would have been more I love yous ...more I’m sorrys ... more I’m listenings ...but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute of it ... look at it and really see it ...try it on ...live it ...exhaust it ...and never give that minute back.”

One shot at life. What are you doing with your one shot at life? Paul understood that we have one chance to get it right. He recognized that

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life is not about marriage, life is about ministry. He understood that life is not about sex, life is about service. And so he wrote 1 Corinthians 7. This is written from the perspective of time running out, with an unmistakable urgency of the immanent *eschaton*, and under the impending certainty of the *parousia*, the second coming of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 7, relationships are not just considered from the perspectives of love and companionship, but how they advance the kingdom of God. There seems to be a force propelling us all into a ship called marriage. And even when we see the name *Titanic* written on the side of the ship, we still can’t wait to jump on board. But there are some significant issues which this passage of Scripture addresses. In the first instance, it speaks to us about *underestimated feelings*.

1. Underestimated Feelings

NOW CONCERNING THE MATTERS ABOUT WHICH YOU WROTE: ‘IT IS GOOD FOR A MAN NOT TO HAVE SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH A WOMAN.’ BUT BECAUSE OF THE TEMPTATION TO SEXUAL IMMORALITY, EACH MAN SHOULD HAVE HIS OWN WIFE AND EACH WOMAN HER OWN HUSBAND. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-2

TO THE UNMARRIED AND THE WIDOWS I SAY THAT IT IS GOOD FOR THEM TO REMAIN SINGLE AS I AM. BUT IF THEY CANNOT EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL, THEY

SHOULD MARRY. FOR IT IS BETTER TO
MARRY THAN TO BURN WITH PASSION.
1 CORINTHIANS 7:8,9

Paul says decisions whether to have sex before marriage and when to have sex in marriage are not based upon how you feel; stop making decisions based upon your emotions and never underestimate the power of feelings. There are feelings that are misplaced and there are feelings that are misinterpreted. *Misplaced* feelings are giving God-ordained passions the wrong assignment. Sexual addiction, pornography and homosexual practice are misplaced feelings. Heterosexual singles struggle against premarital sex and heterosexual marrieds struggle against extramarital sex. Heterosexuals and homosexuals must join in the same struggle to reserve sex until marriage with someone of the opposite sex and then remain in a committed relationship with that one person till death do us part.

So misplaced feelings are giving your God-ordained passions the wrong assignment. *Misinterpreted* feelings are when you let your body rule without checking with your head and it stems from a faulty definition of love. Somebody said love is a feeling you feel when you feel that you're going to get a feeling that you never felt before. That's basing love on feelings. But it's not about feelings, it's about faith. It's not about the heart, it's about the head. It's not about passion, it's about principle. It's not about emotion, it's about devotion. It's not about contentment, it's about commitment. It's not about happiness, it's about holiness. And it's not about Hollywood, it's about the Holy Word.

A young woman told her pastor she was in love. "How do you know?" asked the pastor. "Well, my heart is beating, my brow is perspiring, and my palms are sweaty." "That's not love," exclaimed the pastor. "You've got the flu." Never underestimate the power of feelings. Ellen White (1901) says in Testimonies Vol. 3, page 500: "There are sacrifices to be made for the interests of God's cause. The sacrifice of feeling is the most keen that is required of us; yet after all it is a small sacrifice."

Not only does the passage speak about underestimated feelings, but secondly, it speaks about undiminished faith.

2. Undiminished Faith

I WISH EVERYONE COULD GET ALONG
WITHOUT MARRYING JUST AS I DO.
BUT WE ARE NOT ALL THE SAME. GOD
GIVES SOME THE GIFT OF A HUSBAND
OR WIFE, AND OTHERS HE GIVES THE
GIFT OF BEING ABLE TO STAY HAPPILY
UNMARRIED.
1 CORINTHIANS 7:7 (TLB)

Undiminished faith says that despite what anybody tells you and despite what you may even tell yourself, you have not been left on the shelf by God, you have not been sidelined, you have not been marginalized, you have not been forgotten, you have not been overlooked. You have been given a gift. In fact authors Holly Virden and Michelle Hammond (1972) wrote a book called, *If Singleness is a Gift, What's the Return Policy?* With the eyes of faith, understand that every believer has a gift tailored to their status. Paul says marriage is a gift; and singleness is a gift. Accept your gift by faith because God doesn't give second-rate gifts.

EVERY GOOD GIFT AND EVERY PERFECT
GIFT IS FROM ABOVE, AND COMETH
DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS,
WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABleness,
NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING.
JAMES 1:17

When does a person receive the gift of marriage? When and while you are married. In the Greek, gifts are called charismata, and charis means grace. How many marrieds know that you need the grace of God to help you make it through your marriage? When does a person receive the gift of singleness? When and while you are single. How many singles know that you need the grace of God to help you make it through your singleness? Gifts of marriage and singleness are given to help you survive and thrive in your status. Understand that these gifts are time-sensitive. That means

two things. Firstly, recognize that having the gift of marriage does not mean that you will always be married; therefore having the gift of singleness does not mean that you will always be single. What it does mean is that while you are married or while you are single, God has given you a gift. Secondly, recognize that, like other gifts such as teaching, leadership and administration, these gifts are developed over time. If you are married, Paul says develop that gift. Commit yourself to marital faithfulness, mutual submission, and mutual respect. If you are single, develop that gift. Commit yourself to sexual purity, wholesome relationships, Christian service, and intellectual development.

Gini Andrews (1972) wrote in her book *Your Half of the Apple*, “Some of the most interesting people I know are single. Often they have developed their minds and skills in a way married people have not had time to do” (p.155). If you are 30 now and God sees that at 35 you will get married, He is asking for you to give Him the best of those remaining five years. Don’t bury your gift. There are so many single people who can’t wait to be married and so many mixed-up married people who can’t wait to be single again. God gave you the best He had. Somebody said, Jesus is the best thing that ever happened to me. John said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Ellen White (1908) said in *Steps to Christ*, p. 20: “In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift.” The word from God’s heart to your heart this morning is, with all the faith you can muster, use the gift you’ve got.

Not only does our passage speak to us about underestimated feelings, and not only does it speak about undiminished faith, but finally it speaks about *undistracted* focus.

3. Undistracted Focus

BUT THIS I SAY, BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT: IT REMAINETH, THAT BOTH THEY THAT HAVE WIVES BE AS THOUGH THEY HAD NONE.
1 CORINTHIANS 7:29

A little boy was found crying because he had lost the note his mother had given him for his schoolteacher explaining why he didn’t have a birth certificate. Wailing aloud, the little boy cried, “I’ve lost my excuse for being born.” What is your purpose for being born? The whole of 1 Corinthians 7 is written with a view to the impending doom the apostle Paul believed would soon come upon the world. He says, “The time left is short.” The Greek word translated ‘short’ or ‘shortened’ literally means to draw together or ‘contract.’ The word was used of furling sails, packing luggage, or reducing expenses. It means we only have time to take on board what is absolutely necessary. We can’t afford to carry excess baggage. “I’ve met a man, he pushes me around a little, well a lot really, and I’ve had a black eye or two, but he says he really loves me and I think I love him, Pastor, what do you think?” Two words: excess baggage. “Well, I’ve met a man I would like to marry, he isn’t a fellow Christian, but he’s better than the men in the church anyway, what do you think, Pastor?” Two words: excess baggage. “Well, I’ve met a man. He’s pretty qualified, but he doesn’t plan to work. He says I make enough for both of us. Should I marry him, Pastor?” Two words: excess baggage.

You see, in the final analysis, the focus of 1 Corinthians 7 is not that you should be married or that you should be single, but that you should be singleminded. Look at verse 35: “I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few things as possible to distract your attention from Him.” Jesus says in Luke 9:62, “Anyone who lets himself be distracted from the work I plan for him is not fit for the Kingdom of God.” Ellen White (1901) says in *Testimonies* Vol. 3, page 500, “No earthly ties, no earthly considerations, should weigh one moment in the scale against duty to the cause and work of God. Jesus severed His connection from everything to save a lost world, and He requires of us a full and entire consecration.”

Our focus is not on pleasing ourselves but on building up the kingdom of God in season and out of season. Some people like to choose their season. I’ve noticed that Jesus is decorated in December, and then jostled in January,

forgotten in February, misplaced in March, absent in April, missed out in May, jolted in June, jilted in July, abandoned in August, shelved in September, omitted in October, neglected in November, and then defrosted... dusted down... and dressed up in December. But God is not looking for seasonal Christians, He's looking for reasonable Christians. Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Your excuse for being born, your task, your assignment, your mission -- should you choose to accept it -- is to find the desperate, the desolate, and the destitute, and point them to Jesus.

Appeal

When I pastored in Toronto, one of my Apple Creek church members had a fine tradition. Married to a Christian from another denomination, she would invite her pastor and family to have lunch with her husband's pastor and family. That's how I met John Moore. In the course of our conversing, I asked him about hobbies or if he had written anything. I knew I had written three books, so I was ready for him. "Oh, I've done a little writing," he said meekly. "What book have you written?" "Oh, I don't write books," he responded. "What do you write, then?" "I write hymns." "Hymns!" I said. "What's the name of one of your hymns?" "Oh, I don't think you've heard of it." "Try me." He said, "Days are filled with sorrow and care, Hearts are lonely and drear; Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Jesus is very near." I was conscious that my mouth was wide open. I knew the hymn very well. I was humbled. I would gladly have exchanged all my books for that one hymn by my new friend, John Moore.

When the single and single-again person comes to you and says they are marginalized, traumatized, stigmatized, tell them, "Days are

filled with sorrow and care, Hearts are lonely and drear; Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Jesus is very near." When the married person comes to you and says the romance, the respect, and the love have gone, tell them, "Cast your care on Jesus today, Leave your worry and fear, Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Jesus is very near." When the parent comes to you and tells you that the child of her loins has turned their back on the church of their youth, tell them, "Troubled soul, the Savior can see, Ev'ry heartache and tear, Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Jesus is very near. Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Calvary, Calvary; Burdens are lifted at Calvary, Jesus is very near."

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CHILDREN'S STORIES

Sponges, Brains and Character

ELAINE OLIVER

Biblical Principle

AND DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS
WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE
RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, THAT YOU
MAY PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD AND
ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD.
ROMANS 12:2

Resources:

- Extra Large Sponge
- Clear water - 4 oz.
- Clear Container
- Water color paint (red, blue, or green)
- Picture of brain in a child's head

Song Suggestion: Read your bible, pray every day and you'll grow, grow, grow! (*Or select an action song that is known in your church*)

Illustrate: Show sponge.

Ask: What is this? What does it do?

Say: It can absorb water.

Illustrate: Soak in water

Say: It can soak in water. What will come out when I squeeze it?

Allow children to answer.

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Adapted from a children's story heard at the Seminar Schloss in Bogenhofen, an educational institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Austria and for Switzerland.

Illustrate: Squeeze sponge.

Illustrate: Put drops of paint in water. Hold up container.

Say: What will happen if the sponge soaks in the green (or selected color) water?

Allow children to answer.

Say: What will come out when I squeeze the sponge?

Illustrate: Squeeze sponge.

Say: It will squeeze out what it soaked in. Green (or selected color)

Illustrate: Show picture of brain.

Say: Our brain, our mind, is like a sponge. Everything we "soak in" - what we see (on TV, videos, books, etc.) and what we hear (music, etc) gets soaked into our brain.

If we see and hear good things, we will speak and act in a good way. In the same way if we see and hear things that are not good, it will show when we act and when we speak.

So be careful what you see, what you hear, where you go, what you touch. Spend time reading the Bible, studying your Sabbath school lesson, memorizing your memory verses, and praying. The more we study about Jesus, the more we will become like Him, and walk like Him, and talk like Him, and love like Him.

Close with prayer. (Ask for volunteers).

Sing the selected song with the children.

Biblical Principle

THE MEMORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS
BLESSED...
PROVERBS 10:7

Materials Needed

- 1 or 2 of your favorite children's books
- A small photo album filled with some of your favorite family photos.

Narrative

(Read the Bible verse and emphasize the word "memory.")

That verse in the Bible reminds me that we all like to remember things that are good. I have a bag with some of my favorite things that I like to remember.

How many of you have a favorite story book or picture book that you remember? I remember that I loved to read as a child. In fact, I still love to read today. I love books.

What is your favorite book?

(Allow the children to respond)

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Memories

PAMELA CONSUEGRA

I brought a few of my favorite story books with me today. I have a shelf at home filled with story books on it, but I brought some of my favorites to share with you.

(Pull books out of bag, one at a time and show them. You can mention a brief comment about the book and tell them why it is your favorite.)

But this is probably my most favorite story book!

(Pull out the photo album filled with pictures. Flip through the pages and show them several of your family members.)

It is true that there aren't words in this book, but the pictures tell a story to me... I remember the story behind the pictures when I see them. I have great memories of all of these pictures. Let me tell you a story out of this book...

(Open the album, and point to one of the pictures and tell the story about what is happening in the picture. Tell the children where you were, who is with you, and what was so special about the event captured in the picture?)

Why do you suppose this one is my favorite?

This photo album tells stories about me, and about my friends and family! I remember the day that it happened.

This book filled with photos of my family is a different kind of story book than...*(list the titles of the other books you brought with you)*.

The photos in this book remind me of the stories about my own life experiences!

Do some of you have photos at home of yourself and your family and friends?

And do some of you hear stories around the dinner table told by your parents or aunts and uncles or cousins or grandparents – stories about themselves, or about you when you were younger?

I hope that in the weeks ahead, I get to learn more of your special family stories, and I will share some of my special stories with you, too! Talk to each

other. Tell others of your favorite family memories. It is good to share those with your friends.

Sharing some of our own personal family stories – the kind that come from our memories—can help us learn even more about each other so that you and I can learn what it means for us to be family with each other – a church family.

Will you pray with me?

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for picture books and Bible stories. Thank you for photographs and family stories. Help us to become good friends as we share our memories and make new memories together. In Jesus' name, Amen

The Never-To-Be-Forgotten Birthday

ADAPTED BY ROSEMAY CANGY

Biblical Principle

...AND REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS, THAT HE SAID, 'IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.'
ACTS 20:35

Materials Needed

- 3 x \$1 bills
- A gift bag or a poster tube

Narrative

It was Eric's birthday and he had received a letter from his Uncle Don with three \$1 bills included in the envelope. In addition, Uncle Don also gave Eric a challenge for his birthday. He asked Eric to use the money to buy one special gift which he would match in value. If Eric chose to buy something good, Uncle Don would match it and if he bought something silly, Uncle Don would also buy something silly to match it.

Eric planned to go shopping after school on Friday with his sister Becky who was two years younger so that she could help him pick a gift from the shops nearby. He explained that he needed to decide what he was going to buy with Uncle Don's money as he realized

that it would be extremely hard to decide what would not be a silly gift to buy.

He spent a whole day thinking about it all until he came to make a list of possible things that he could buy for three dollars: a new model plane, a light for his bike, another Hot Wheels car to add to his collection or a baseball.

On Thursday morning as they walked to school, Becky asked Eric if he had made up his mind about his gift and she added that she was glad that they were not shopping on that day because she had a sore throat. Unfortunately Becky's throat got worse by the afternoon and the next day, Friday, her mom said that she was too sick to go to school and that she would not be able to go shopping with Eric as planned.

So Eric headed for the shops on his own; he had made up his mind that he wanted to add another Hot Wheels car to his collection. But as he was hunting for the right car in this big new store, he found something else that he just had to have. It was a giant-sized poster of a gorilla with a sign that said "Nobody is going to push me around". In his mind, he could already see the exact place for his poster in his room and he thought that would be a good motto that would impress his classmates when they came to visit. As he returned home, he found out that Becky's condition had worsened and the doctor had been called to check on her.

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When Eric went into the room he found that she was very upset and teary because she now had to stay in bed longer until her fever subsided and that she would not be able to go to the pet zoo with her friend Maureen on Sunday as she had planned.

With a quick good-bye, Eric turned around and ran out of the house, back to the shop with his recently-bought poster in his hand. He explained to the store manager that he wanted to return the poster and exchange it for something that would cheer up his sick sister. He chose a little bowl and two gold fish which he carried home very carefully.

Becky was delighted to receive the gold fish though she felt bad that Eric had used up his birthday money for her. However he assured her that her happiness and her smiles were all that mattered.

A few days later, Uncle Don arrived and he was surprised to hear the story of the two goldfish. He was very pleased to see that Eric had met the challenge and had chosen the perfect gift for Becky so thoughtfully. He asked Eric to take him to the same store where he had bought the fish and there he bought Eric some more Hot Wheels car for his collection.

As Eric was beaming with gratitude and joy for this unexpected birthday present, the store manager gave him a tube containing another poster. This one had a large and happy elephant eating a huge peanut with the words: "Good deeds always bring giant-sized happiness to others".

Reference

Peckham, K. (1982). *The Never-to-Be-Forgotten Birthday*. Retrieved from : <http://guidemagazine.org/stories/3897-the-never-to-be-forgotten-birthday>

SEMINARS

Leaving a Legacy of Love

ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER

The Text

THEREFORE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS
FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED
TO HIS WIFE, AND THEY SHALL BECOME
ONE FLESH.
GENESIS 2:24

Theme

Marriage is one of the most challenging and rewarding of relationships. If couples are to experience the full joy of oneness God intended, they must fight daily for their marriage. In doing so, they will leave a legacy of love for themselves, their children, their church, and their community.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the most challenging and rewarding relationships human beings will ever enter into. Many people today want to believe that if they are “in love” and they have a perfect wedding that’s all that matters. The truth is: Good marriages take work!

Couples getting married always hope their marriage will be happy and will last for a lifetime. However, with today’s divorce rate

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of about 50 percent¹, many people wonder if this is a realistic expectation. In reality, all marriages will encounter conflict. Having conflict is not the real problem; how we deal with conflict is going to determine how healthy or disastrous your relationship will be. Furthermore, when couples are experiencing conflict or distress in their relationships, many perceive their relationship is not good enough to survive. This is simply not true: many marriages that end in divorce are “good enough” to be salvaged.²

God, the Creator of marriage, has given us very clear instructions on how to make marriage work. The problem is that many couples are not consulting God’s manual and are willing to give up at the first sign of trouble. It’s like buying a new car and never reading the manual, then when the car has some inevitable mechanical problems, leaving it by the roadside. What a ridiculous thought! Unfortunately, too many marriages end in much the same way.

The good news is that marriages can survive and thrive, but couples will have to fight for their marriage. By God’s grace, couples can learn specific skills that will give them tools to maintain and enhance their oneness, intimacy, communication, and friendship and eliminate barriers that keep them from experiencing the joys of marriage.

The Dilemma of Modern Marriage

God made humans male and female (Genesis 1:27). In marriage, God joins husband and wife in an inseparable bond. This bond is a higher calling than the parent-child relationship, for a man is to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife in a one-flesh relationship (Genesis 2:24). Therefore, what God has joined together people should not separate (Matthew 19: 6b).

In the table below, Balswick and Balswick (2006) share the following summary of the competing sides of traditional marriage, modern marriage, and biblical marriage.

As we examine the traditional and the modern (postmodern) view of marriage, it is clear that neither one is necessarily representative of God’s plan. That is not to say that there are not some positive aspects in those views. However, many people mistakenly push traditional values as biblical values, and they are not the same.

The dilemma in modern marriage is how does a couple become one without compromising individual distinctiveness? Couples today are struggling to balance personal fulfillment with relationship fulfillment—this is a task that must be mastered if marriage is to remain a viable institution in society.

Often, people tout traditional marriage as being the answer to this dilemma, boasting that only 10% of the marriages in our great-grandparents’ days ended in divorce. But a closer glance at this style of marriage will also reveal that the marriages of yesteryear had their fair share of challenges.

Perhaps it is time to change our lens and step back from the rigid traditional view which is more focused on the institution of marriage and from the modern (post-modern) individualistic focus on personal, and move towards a biblical understanding of covenant commitment and mutual responsibility.

God intended for marriage to be a place where both people experience trust, safety, and oneness. If two people are to become one, there has to be a mutuality that seeks that good of the relationship and not just the needs of the individual. When we base our marriage on a biblical foundation and live by God-designed principles, we will find fulfillment and satisfaction in the marriage relationship.

“AT THE VERY HEART OF MARRIAGE IS THE WILLINGNESS OF SPOUSES TO LET GO OF THEIR PERSONAL AGENDA SO THAT THEY CAN TRULY LISTEN TO WHAT THEIR PARTNER IS SAYING.” (JACK O. BALSWICK & BALSWICK, 2014, P. 93)

Traditional	Biblical	Modern
Commitment (to the institution)	Covenant (between husband and wife)	Contract (self-fulfilment)
Coercive	Cohesive	Disengaged
Dutiful Sex	Affectionate Sex (mutual pleasure)	Self-Centered Sex (personal pleasure)
Rigid	Adaptable/Flexible	Chaotic (no rules)
Male-Centered	Relationship-Centered	Self-Centered
Communication Style (pronouncement)	Discussion (negotiation)	Demand (stalemate)

God's Plan For Marriage

The Bible presents the true picture of how human relationships should look. Human beings are created by a relational Triune God—The Trinity, God, being one, yet composed of three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Jack O. Balswick & Balswick, 2014). First, our relational God created us to be in relationship with Him; then He created us to be in significant and fulfilling relationships with others. Hence, our relationships are to reflect the relationality within the Holy Trinity. In essence, God intends for all our relationships to be a reflection of Him!

Of course, God is perfect and as human beings we are not perfect. Hence, we must acknowledge our weakness and humbly seek God's guidance for grace and strength to reflect His glory to our spouse.

In the old and new testaments we find four basic elements that are essential to healthy relationships and will help us leave a legacy of love. These elements are covenant, grace, empowering, and intimacy.

Covenant: In the Bible, covenant is a word used to describe marriage, the most serious and compelling agreement known in the Scriptures (**Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:16, 17**). It is God's intent that the relationship between husband and wife be modeled after His endless covenant with His people.

Contrary to popular belief, marriage is not a 50/50 proposition. The covenant relationship in marriage is a 100/100 proposition. It is based on unconditional commitment to an individual based on our decision to love them, and not on that individual's response to our love. Paul, the apostle, in *1 Corinthians 13:5* states categorically, "Love keeps no record of wrongs."

In marriage, God gives us opportunities to understand His love for us and the plan of salvation. And it is especially a part of God's plan for the marriage relationship to develop into an unconditional two-way commitment.

Grace: God wants us to understand that grace is about forgiving and being forgiven—(**Matthew 6:15**). Marriage as designed by God is to be lived out in an atmosphere of grace, not law. Marriage based upon contract, leads to an atmosphere of law, while marriage based on covenant leads to an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness. In an atmosphere of grace, family members act responsibly out of love and consideration for one another. In a family based on law, perfection will be demanded of each other. This approach to relating adds guilt to the failure that is inevitable because of our fallen and broken human condition (**Romans 3:23-24**). Let's face the reality of life; we are all going to make mistakes in our relationships. There is no humanly possible way of getting around this fact, though many may be in denial of its existence.

Unfortunately, because of the legalism that often accompanies a fundamentalist approach to faith and religion, despite the grace-filled life of Jesus Christ and the message found in the parables He shared, we often fail to offer grace to one another in relationships.

Too often Christians experience emotional problems because of our lack of understanding of God's unconditional love and grace. If we do not understand this then, it is difficult or impossible for us to share His unconditional love, grace and forgiveness with others.

Ellen White says, "Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. It illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the entire being" (White, 1948, p. 123). We offer grace and forgiveness to those we have decided to love and have determined to be in relationship with, because tomorrow we are the ones that will need to be the recipients of that grace.

Empowering: God wants us to know, definitively, that life is about service. That is, serving one another. Empowering is a biblical concept for the use of power, which without exception, is contrary to the common use of power in our families and this capitalistic

society of ours. It is an active, intentional process of enabling another person to acquire power. The person who is empowered has gained power because of the encouraging behavior of the other (**1 Corinthians 13:4-6**).

Empowerment is the process of helping another person recognize their strengths and potentials within, as well as encouraging and guiding the development of these qualities. When we empower people, we in turn are empowered, and our relationship is enhanced.

Empowerment is love in action. It is this characteristic of Jesus Christ that our family members must emulate most. If we can practice empowerment in our families, it will revolutionize the view of authority in Christian homes. Coercion and manipulation are the opposite of empowerment—it is a distortion of what real power is. Empowerment is about mutuality and unity.

Intimacy: Intimacy is, knowing someone and being known by that person in a covenant relationship. Human beings have the capacity, given them by God, to know each other intimately. The intimacy that Adam and Eve felt was an ability to be themselves without any pretense. They had no need to play deceptive games with one another, because they had respect for one another and didn't abuse one another (**Genesis 2:25**).

Shame, to be sure, is born out of fear of being known intimately. When shame is present, family members put on masks and begin to play deceptive roles for each other. By contrast, as we examine how Genesis describes the nature of the human family before the fall, we find an emphasis on intimacy--on the knowing of the other.

Many people are afraid to enter into relationships for the fear of being rejected by another. Thus, one who is afraid of rejection does not allow himself to be intimately known by another person. Never sharing their true feelings, there is no basis for a real relationship, and they grope in relationship darkness--hampered, handicapped, and hindered, by their lack of self-disclosure.

Couples who base their marriage on covenant love, grace and empowering one another, know each other deeply and intimately.

The unconditional love modeled by Jesus gives us a picture of the type of communicative intimacy desirable in marriage and other significant relationships. Forgiving and being forgiven will be an important part of renewal. There will be a need to confess as well as to receive confession. Where there is real intimacy, there is no need to be ashamed to admit failure or ask for forgiveness. In fact, it is only when we take the steps to understand what Jesus did for us and continues to do for us each day that we can get to the point of being able to achieve intimacy with another individual, and find satisfaction in the relationship.

Barriers to Oneness

In the book, *A Lasting Promise*, (Stanley, Trathen, McCain, & Bryan, 2013) Scott Stanley and others share some barriers that keep marriages and other relationships from reaching their full potential and experiencing the blessings God intended for us.

Self-Protection and the fear of rejection—

After Adam and Even sinned they immediately covered themselves. Then they hid from each other, and they hid from God. They became aware of their differences, and feared they would be rejected by one another and by God. Oneness will not happen in an environment of fear and lack of acceptance.

Sin and selfishness— *“The fact is, a marriage brings together two imperfectly motivated people who strongly--and somewhat selfishly--desire intimacy and the other good things of life, but who fear being hurt”.* (p. 21) Both the traditional and the post-modern view discussed earlier will lead to sin and selfishness. Oneness in marriage only thrives when each individual is focused on serving the other person—it is other-centered not self-centered.

Lack of Knowledge—The ability to quote scripture doesn't automatically mean you know what to do to thrive in marriage. For example: do

you know how to listen to your mate, when you disagree, or you are in a heated debate? Do you know how to stop an argument before damaging things are said? Do you know how deepen commitment, problem solve as a team, work through the process of forgiving one another? Anyone can learn how to do these things.

Building a Strong Marriage

A good beginning in marriage does not guarantee a successful marriage. Couples must be committed to applying God's word to marriage every day. Make the following commitments today suggested by Stanley and team in the CPREP Program³:

- Commit to tearing down barriers in your marriage and keeping them down. *Serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13.*
- Commit to focusing on what you can do to be a better spouse. *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19.*
- Commit to loving your spouse like God loves. *Love is patient; love is kind... it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7.*

Exercise

Engage the group or each couple in a 15-minute discussion with the following questions:

1. How does the traditional and modern views of marriage compare to the biblical view of marriage?
2. What does it mean to be in a "good enough" marriage? How can a couple go from "good enough" to "great"?
3. What other relational scriptures can you think about that will enhance your marriage or other relationships? Choose two or three, write them down, and commit to using them in your relationships everyday.

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Notes

- ¹ Vespa, J. et al (2013). pp. 20-570. *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2012. Population characteristics*. US Census Bureau. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf>

The American divorce rate today is about twice that of 1960, but has declined since hitting its highest point in our history in the early 1980s. For the average couple marrying for the first time in recent years, the lifetime probability of divorce or separation now falls between 40 and 50 percent.

Adventist Families in North American. Center for Creative Ministry and North American Division Family Ministries (2010). Retrieved from www.creativeministry.org

More than one in four Adventist Church members in North America has gone through a divorce. Those over 45 years of age are more likely to have done so, as those from households with incomes under \$25,000 a year, those who are native-born and those who report their ethnicity as African American.

- ² Most Marriages and Divorces Are Low Conflict. Retrieved from <http://www.divorcesource.com/ds/considering/most-marriages-and-divorces-are-low-conflict-483.shtml>
- ³ CPREP: Christian Preparation and Relationship Enhancement Program. <https://www.prepinc.com>

Making Memories

CLAUDIO & PAMELA CONSUEGRA

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

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

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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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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?

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!”

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.

CONNECT

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

Seven Practical Ideas To Build Positive Memories And Traditions

We’d like to share seven ideas your 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

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!

Reference

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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!!

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?

Messy Church

CLAIR SANCHES-SCHUTTE

How did it all begin?

The Background to Messy Church

The first Messy Church began in 2004 when a group of people became frustrated as they were not reaching any children with God's story. They had lovely buildings and facilities but were not using them enough. The church was filled with wonderful creative people and the community needed a community-building church, a place for families to come together.

There was a lot of sympathy towards church in general, but the church was not offering anything that really gripped the imagination of local families.

Initially, the thought was that something needed to be done to gather people of all ages together. This was partly based on the belief that a church grows best when different people journey together and especially when families grow together in their journey of faith.

And that was when the idea of Messy Church was born.

Messy Church meets once a month; this is a time when families come together. They create things together, eat together and

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celebrate God and his Word, through singing and music and through prayer. It's different from a Vacation Bible School, for example, where parents drop off their children. This is a day when parents and carers are together with their children throughout the church time.

With Messy Church we are aiming to be a worshipping community of all ages, centred on Christ and showing Christian hospitality. We want to give people a chance to express their creativity, to sit together, to eat a meal and have fun within a church context.

Our principles, in no particular order, are:

- To provide an opportunity for people of all ages to worship together.
- To help people of all ages to feel that they belong in church and to each other.
- To help people have fun together.
- To give people a chance to express their God-given creativity.
- To invite people into an experience of Christian community.
- To introduce people to Jesus through hospitality, friendship, stories and worship.

Usually we hear the following:

Behave: We want you to change; become like us.

Believe: We want you to think like us; believe like one of us.

Belong: Finally, because you have repented and now have faith and believe that God has forgiven you, you are a part of the family of God; welcome.

In actual fact, what we should be aiming for is the complete reverse.

Belong: Because God loves you unconditionally, we will do the same. Welcome.

Believe: We now invite you into God's truth.

Become: And as you believe, your life will be transformed from the inside out.

Now we should not proceed this way because we think we will attract more people into the church, but because we genuinely love unconditionally. People will see the difference. We are not into marketing strategies, but we are in the business of bringing God's love and grace to people because we love them.

The gospel focuses on Christ and his amazing grace. It focuses on who Jesus truly is, and what He actually has done for us and in us. The focus of this gospel is Jesus Christ, not our performance.

This gospel declares that we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, apart from any effort or merit of our own. God accepts and embraces all humanity as his forgiven, dearly loved children because of what Jesus has done. We are included - we all belong. Now believe and your behavior will follow.

A Messy Church program could look like this:

15:30 - Door open	People arrive, play board games and have a drink and biscuits
16:00 - 17:00	Craft Time
17:00 - 17:15	Celebration service in church
17:15 - 17:45	Hot meal together

Now this is just an outline. You can play with the times so that it suits you. Also it can be run as a mid-week club, as a Sabbath afternoon program or any time you think would fit your church schedule and neighborhood.

The Welcome

Do we realize how difficult it is for some people to enter a church building? The welcome needs to be genuine and encouraging. Show people where to go and don't leave them wandering around on their own or getting lost in the building. Plan for a time to relax. Mingle and talk to people, have a drink and biscuits, have things laying around for kids to do.

You need outgoing people at the door who make contact easily. The first thing people do is register.

The craft time

The craft time allows for an hour for leisurely unhurried experimentation and enjoyment of the various crafts on offer. See below the number of crafts we advise. The crafts are all planned around the Bible's theme of the day. Try to stick to the theme as people can become overwhelmed with too much information especially if they are not familiar with the Bible. There should be a variety of activities. Especially remember to think of boys when planning and to remember the different learning styles. During craft time you could also do some games. Be creative.

The suggestion is the following:

- 0-3 years about 6 crafts (because they cannot concentrate for too long on one thing).
- 4-6 years about 4 crafts.
- 7-9 years about 4 crafts.
- 10-13 years 1 craft to really work on (because this age group needs to feel that it is worth doing).

Celebration

This is a time when families will celebrate God together. This will happen through music and song, prayer and a sermonette. Many parents attending may not know anything of the Bible but will grow each month with their children in knowledge of God's saving grace and what Jesus has done for us. Journeying as families is what it is all about.

The Meal

The meal does not only feed the body but it is an opportunity for church members to actually mingle and get to know people. Making friends and investing in the lives of visitors is what Jesus asked us to do. When people share a meal they are more open and this is a time we can show God's word in action and in words.

Don't have a meal as a buffet style. You need to sit and eat together at a table as families.

What are the values of 'Messy Church'?

Creativity – Genesis 1:1

Celebration – Psalm 150

Hospitality – Philippians 2:15,16

Christ-centred – 1 Corinthians 10:31

All-age – Nehemiah 12:43

Messy Church is not a program run by a few faithful people. Messy Church is something all members can take part in whether you do something in the background or whether you are leading out. In the church I go to there are over 50 people involved.

Reference

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Note

A clip from 4th quarter 2013 Adventist Mission DVD could be shown. This is a 4.23 minutes overview of what Messy Church is.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

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

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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.

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.

Reference

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Creating Exciting Family Worship

S. JOSEPH KIDDER

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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. WHITE¹

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.”² Every Christian family should have such time daily.

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

responsible for the moral and spiritual development of their children³, 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 month⁴. Among active SDA members, 40% of families never have worship at home⁵, 27% have worship on a daily basis⁶; 33% have family worship once a week.⁷

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 21⁸ families regarding the best way to have family worship.

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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.⁹ 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 own¹⁰. Research shows that children whose families are active in their faith development have a higher probability of staying in the church¹¹. 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 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 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.

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.”¹²
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.¹³
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.¹⁴

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.**¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ 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." *Valuegenesis³ Update*, Issues no 4: 2012, 5. hwc.edu.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.

The Marshmallow Test

PAMELA CONSUEGRA

A psychological experiment known as “The Marshmallow Test” (University of Pennsylvania, 2013) has captured the public’s imagination as a marker of self-control and even as a predictor of future success in children. This was a test that measured self-control in children as well as their ability to practice delayed gratification.

in relationships—even decades after they took the test. They were, in short, better at life. In short, the marshmallow test changed the way educators and psychologists thought about success: The lesson learned was that it’s not just intelligence that matters, but self-control, patience and being able to tame one’s impulses through delayed gratification.

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In the classic marshmallow test, researchers gave children a choice between one or two marshmallows. After the children enthusiastically choose two, the experimenter says that they need to leave the room for “a little while.” The children are also told that, if they can hold off eating the one marshmallow that is placed in front of them until the researcher returns, they can have the two marshmallows they prefer. With the children left alone in the room, hidden cameras tracked how long they were able to, or if, they were able to resist the temptation. Most of the children tested tried to wait but ended up caving in within a few minutes.

The kids’ responses seem illogical to us as adults. After all, if you have decided to wait in the first place, why wouldn’t you wait the whole way through in order to get a bigger reward? Delayed gratification! It’s something that we all struggle with from time to time. But, let’s be honest. Even as adults, when we want it, we want it now!

Tracking the kids over time, researchers concluded that the ability to hold out in this seemingly trivial exercise had real and profound consequences. As they matured and became adults, the kids who had shown the ability to wait got better grades, were healthier, enjoyed greater professional success, and proved better at staying

The question that this raises is truly one for us, as parents, as we teach Christian stewardship principles to our children. Teaching is best achieved by modeling the same behavior that we want our children to emulate. Are we using all of our resources (time, talents, and treasures) for God’s glory? Is it a common practice in our homes to lay before God all of our wants and needs? Do our children see us, as parents, satisfying all of our heart’s desires, or, do they see us kneeling before God asking Him to help us get our priorities in line with His will for our lives?

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Consider this important counsel, “Teach your children from the cradle to practice self-denial and self-control. Bring them up to have

sound constitutions and good morals. Impress upon their tender minds the truth that God does not design that we shall live for present gratification merely, but for our ultimate good. These lessons will be as seed sown in fertile soil, and they will bear fruit that will make your hearts glad” (White, 1954, pp 113). Those are powerful words, written many years ago, that still ring true today. The lessons that we teach our children from the cradle will bear fruit throughout their entire lifetime, and indeed, into eternity.

If, as indicated by research and divine counsel, delayed gratification or self control influences so many aspects of our children’s future, how can we, as parents teach this important life skill to our children?

1. Be a Positive Christian Role Model: This is the most important way to teach self control and delayed gratification. How do we handle our own money? Do we have a budget? A savings account? Do our children witness us saving to purchase what we plan to acquire? Do they hear us praying for wisdom regarding our financial decisions? After all, this really is an issue of practicing Christian stewardship principles.

2. Teach Waiting: Many parents have their child save only a portion of the money needed to purchase a “want.” They then take the rest of the needed money out of their own wallets to “make up the difference.” Instead, if that same child would have been required to save up all the money for the desired object, you might be amazed at how many times they would decide not to get it as soon as they have the money.

3. Teach the Value of a Penny: Look for opportunities to reinforce the point that by spending money on seemingly small things (ice cream, soda, arcade games) for immediate gratification, they are not in a position to buy something significant they really want. The small purchase might have only seemed like pennies at the time, but those pennies add up.

4. Teach Consequences: When they buy something, make a point to ask them a week (for smaller children) or a month later if they think it was a smart choice. Was it worth their money? What if you placed that item or items on the table in front of the child along with the cash that equaled the purchase price? Which would they pick today? You may be surprised to see how many children admit that they made a poor decision and would rather have the money in their pockets.

5. Teach Saving: Set up a savings account for them. Sit down and go over the account with them so that they can see the progress they are making month after month and year after year. This is an opportunity to teach valuable lessons about compound interest and seeing how saving is built up over time.

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Growing In Love

ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER

The Text

NOW MAY OUR GOD AND FATHER
HIMSELF, AND OUR LORD JESUS, DIRECT
OUR WAY TO YOU, AND MAY THE LORD
MAKE YOU INCREASE AND ABOUND IN
LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ALL,
AS WE DO FOR YOU, SO THAT HE MAY
ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS BLAMELESS
IN HOLINESS BEFORE OUR GOD AND
FATHER, AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD
JESUS WITH ALL HIS SAINTS.
1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13: (ESV)

Introduction

On a recent trip to Cape Town, South Africa, we were filled with joy and humility when introduced to Siphon and Thandiwe during a speaking appointment at one of the churches in the area. This husband and wife duo had attended one of our seminars on an earlier visit. With plans in hand to divorce, Siphon and Thandiwe participated in our seminar out of curiosity. They had also promised friends they would come, so they were present.

Our seminar on that occasion was about developing healthier marriage relationships. Impacted by what they heard, Siphon and

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Thandiwe determined to use the information we provided to work on having a healthier and more meaningful marriage. What a joy it was to meet this amazing couple whose marriage had made an about face because of what we shared with them a couple of years before.

Today, many of us are in difficult and stressed relationships with our fathers, mothers, children, spouses, neighbors, friends, church members, pastors, aunts, uncles, grandparents or grandchildren. It is Satan's plan to bring strife, stress, tension and trauma in our relationships. Nevertheless, God wants to give us peace, joy, and contentment in our relationships so we can exude His love to the world and make memories that will keep us hopeful for the future until Jesus comes again.

First Thessalonians came to the church at Thessalonica from three authors—Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1:1, see also 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Paul was clearly the primary author of the letter (2:18; 3:5; 5:27), but he was happy to share the credit with his ministry colleagues.

Silvanus—called Silas in the book of Acts—was a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22), a prophet (Acts 15:32), and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37–38). He became Paul's traveling companion after Paul's separation from Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41). While in Philippi, they suffered a beating and

imprisonment together shortly before their arrival in Thessalonica. On the other hand, Timothy was a younger man Paul met on his first missionary journey, and immediately joined Paul in ministry (Acts 16:1–3), helping Paul and Silas establish the church at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9).

The historical context of 1 and 2 Thessalonians is described in Acts 17 and 18 and hinted at in the letters as well. After a painful experience in Philippi (Acts 16:12–40; 1 Thessalonians 2:2), Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) moved on to the city of Thessalonica, which had a Jewish synagogue (Acts 17:1). In Thessalonica Paul preached from the Scriptures that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer first and then rise from the dead. He also attempted to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of what the Messiah was supposed to be like (Acts 17:2–3). In the process of Paul’s preaching, many Jews and Greeks believed (Acts 17:4), but rioting broke out (Acts 17:5–6) and the city authorities intervened (Acts 17:8–9), prompting Paul and Silas—and presumably Timothy—to leave the city in a hurry (Acts 17:10).

After further trouble in Berea, Paul travelled to Athens and sent for Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:14–15). Soon after this, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to visit the believers there and check on their spiritual progress (1 Thessalonians 3:1–2). Silas also went back to Macedonia (Acts 18:5), ostensibly to visit the young church in Philippi and encourage the believers. After Paul left Athens, he traveled to Corinth (Acts 18:1) where he was rejoined by Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5). It was during this time in Corinth that Paul and his companions wrote 1 Thessalonians.

In Paul’s day Greece was divided into two Roman provinces. The northern province that included Thessalonica and Philippi was called Macedonia. The southern province, which included Athens and Corinth, was called Achaia. Both provinces are also mentioned in this letter, as well as in Acts 19:21, Romans 15:26, and in 2 Corinthians 9:2 and 11:9–10. Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia,

with a port on the Aegean Sea and a major highway—the Egnatian Way—leading to the Adriatic Sea and on to Rome.

The first letter to Thessalonica was likely written from Corinth, as mentioned above, since Paul seemed to be aware of what the people in Achaia were thinking, the province where Corinth was located (1 Thessalonians 1:7–8). The first letter to the Thessalonians was written around A.D. 50 to 51, a short time after Paul’s original visit to the city (1 Thessalonians 2:17).

It is natural for new believers to face serious challenges in the early weeks following their conversion. Paul was aware of this reality and being unable to be with them during this time, he sent Timothy to check on the spiritual stability of the believers. Once Paul received a report of the faithfulness of the new believers and also about some challenges they were facing; he responded to their questions and experiences with the letter we know as 1 Thessalonians.

The Thessalonian church was suffering from behavior issues due in part to confused ideas about the return of Jesus and the events that would surround His return. So the primary focus of 1 Thessalonians is on the last days of earth’s history. In fact, every chapter of the letter concludes with a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus (1:9–10; 2:19–20; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:23–24).

It is very possible the Thessalonians misunderstood Paul’s teaching, assuming they would all still be alive until Jesus returned. They seemed to understand that believers who died would be seriously disadvantaged in some way at Jesus’ return (4:13–15). However, Paul assures the Thessalonian believers in his letter that the righteous dead will be resurrected first to fully participate with those who are alive (4:15–17). He also makes clear that Jesus’ coming will not be secretive (4:16) and that all the redeemed will meet Him in the air (4:17).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, Paul turns his focus to readiness for the Second Coming.

While the timing of Jesus' return will be a surprise (5:2–3), Paul teaches that believers will be prepared for this event by spiritual alertness and self-discipline (5:4–8), fueled by hope and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (5:8–10). By having accurate knowledge of what will happen in the time of the end, the believers find encouragement to deal with the challenges of the present (4:18; 5:11).

Since the Thessalonian church was holding firm in its decision for Christ, Paul also focused on the struggles they were having in living out their faith. Contemporary Roman society had little sexual restraint, much like the realities of today. In contrast, Paul carefully teaches these believers that sex outside of marriage damages the individuals involved, as well as others who are being influenced by them (4:3–6).

It would also appear that some of the Thessalonians had stopped working (4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–7, 11), were living off others (2 Thessalonians 3:6–7), and had become disruptive and undisciplined (1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–7, 11), losing the respect of even their Gentile neighbors. Paul responds by emphasizing that Christians should mind their own business (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12) and support themselves as they await the return of Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:6–9).

The Application

Taking our cues from the apostle Paul, we note that the Bible is a text for human relationships. One example of this notion is how relational directives are commands intended to create a basic framework for living in relationship with fellow human beings: for example, Matthew 7:12: “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them... (the golden rule).” Matthew 22:39 “love your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 6:27: “love your enemies.” Romans 12:18: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Ephesians 5:21: “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

There are specific relational directives for families:

Marriage – Proverbs 5:18: “rejoice in the wife of your youth.” Ephesians 5:22, 25: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.”

Parents – Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Children – Proverbs 4:1: “Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight.” Colossians 3:20: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

At least three of the commandments are intended to protect, preserve and enhance life in the family, society and church: Exodus 20:12: “Honor your father and your mother...” Exodus 20:14: “You shall not commit adultery.” Exodus 20:17: “you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife...”

As we prepare for the coming of the Lord, we should be mindful of *growing in love*, so that we may make memories that strengthen each of our relationships to help hasten the day of the Lord.

In December 2013 we were in Athens, Greece to conduct leadership training in Family Ministries for the Trans-European Division. There were leaders from England, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Sweden, and perhaps a couple other countries. In the middle of the week the Division Directors had arranged an outing to Corinth, one of the cities where the apostle Paul lived and ministered.

Corinth was a city-state on the Isthmus of Corinth, the narrow stretch of land that joins the Peloponnesus to the mainland in Greece, roughly halfway between Athens and Sparta and about 48 miles southwest of Athens. On our chartered bus it took about an hour to get there. Just before leaving Athens, Pastor Apostolos Maglis, President of the Greek Mission, gave each participant a copy of a chapter from the book *Come Over Into Macedonia and Help Us*, written by Katerina Erevnidou, a Greek Adventist scholar

who chronicled the apostle Paul's ministry in Greece and especially in Corinth.

By the time we arrived in Corinth, we had read the chapter and received an education on the reason the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13 had been written to the Corinthians.

Corinth was a wealthy city because of its commerce, its location on the Isthmus and its two harbors. The Phoenicians, being the most famous naval and commercial people of antiquity, had an agency of commerce and navigation in Corinth; so Corinth became the center of important handicrafts. The transport of ships and goods from one seaport to the other brought many sailors who spent quite a bit of time in Corinth. And since international seaports are especially known for their corruption, Corinth—an international seaport—was also known for its corruption.

The main divinity of the ancient world worshipped in Corinth was Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love. A great part of her adoration was based on prostitution. So rich was the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth that it had as priestesses over a thousand prostitutes consecrated to the worship of the goddess by both men and women. Naturally, the presence of these women attracted great numbers of men and especially wealthy travelers, merchants and ship owners, contributing to the enrichment of the city, and to the financial ruin of many of these travelers delivered to voluptuousness. Indeed, from the root word "Corinth" derived the verb "corinthiazein" which means to live in luxury and debauchery. Thus was the Corinth of Paul's day. In this context, the apostle Paul under inspiration directs the Corinthian believers to a true understanding of love.

The heart of the love message is in vv. 4-8 of 1 Corinthians 13: (4) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boasts; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends....

We must be *growing in love*, to make the kind of memories that will help us remain disciples of Jesus Christ. It must be a life of intentionally invoking the power of God in our lives each day, to be more and more like Jesus, patient and kind and forgiving.

When we compare ourselves to the ideals of God's Word, we also utter in desperation and shame what the apostle Paul states in Romans 7:15-24:

FOR I DO NOT UNDERSTAND MY OWN ACTIONS. FOR I DO NOT DO WHAT I WANT, BUT I DO THE VERY THING I HATE. NOW IF I DO WHAT I DO NOT WANT, I AGREE WITH THE LAW, THAT IT IS GOOD. SO NOW IT IS NO LONGER I WHO DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLS WITHIN ME. FOR I KNOW THAT NOTHING GOOD DWELLS IN ME, THAT IS, IN MY FLESH. FOR I HAVE THE DESIRE TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT, BUT NOT THE ABILITY TO CARRY IT OUT. FOR I DO NOT DO THE GOOD I WANT, BUT THE EVIL I DO NOT WANT IS WHAT I KEEP ON DOING. NOW IF I DO WHAT I DO NOT I DO NOT WANT, IT IS NO LONGER I WHO DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLS WITHIN ME. SO I FIND IT TO BE A LAW THAT WHEN I WANT TO DO RIGHT, EVIL LIES CLOSE AT HAND. FOR I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD, IN MY INNER BEING, BUT I SEE IN MY MEMBERS ANOTHER LAW WAGING WAR AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND AND MAKING ME CAPTIVE TO THE LAW OF SIN THAT DWELLS IN MY MEMBERS. WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH? THANKS BE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!...

Today we remind you that to remain the people of God we must, by definition, be *growing in love* each day. We know this is possible as the apostle Paul writes his letter to the Philippians in chapter 4:13: I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Conclusion

Every Sabbath morning I (Willie) receive a group text from Bill Knott, the editor of the

Adventist Review/Adventist World, whose office is not far from ours. The text Bill sent several months ago lies at the heart of the matter if we are going to be *growing in love*. It reads: “Dear Brother in Christ: Funny, isn’t it, how all our measures of success are changed when grace inhabits us? We move others to the front; we treasure silence; we forgive often; we criticize infrequently. We lay down the gavel and the rod. We pick up—happily—the basin and the towel. Grace tells us we need nothing more than Jesus, and it assures us that we will one day celebrate among that great unnumbered throng who care not a whit whether they sing better than their fellows.”

As we live our lives on this earth until Jesus comes—and He is coming soon—we must continue to be *growing in love*. To be sure, we can’t do so on our own. We will falter like the Thessalonians or the Corinthians who did not listen to Paul and did not avail themselves of the power of God.

In the context of *growing in love*, Ellen White shares in *The Ministry of Healing* p. 486: “if impatient words are spoken to you, never reply in the same spirit.”

To be *growing in love* we must remember to grow in Christ each day. To grow in Christ each day we must always remember, He promised to ‘be with us always’ (Matthew 28:20), ‘give

us His peace’ (John 14:27) and ‘supply all our needs’ (Philippians 4:13).

When we met Siphon and Tandhiwe in South Africa, they looked happy. They looked connected. They could have been confused for a couple on their honeymoon. The spark was back; the love was obvious. They had made up their minds that their lives together needed to be about *growing in love* and making memories that would keep their marriage healthy and strong.

Let’s trust and rely on God each day so that there will be peace in all of our relationships, we will daily make good memories, and we will be ready for the coming of the Lord.

May God bless us to this end is our prayer.

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REPRINTED ARTICLES

The Most Important Thing You Need To Know About Parenting

DONNA HABENICHT

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The evening meal was the most important one of the day in Maria and Jorge's home, the only time they ate together as a family. Nothing was allowed to interfere with this cherished family time - no newspapers, no books, no TV, no iPads, no computers, no cell phones and the landline automatically went to the answering machine. Their kids, from four-year-old Yomarie to thirteen-year-old Pedro, eagerly anticipated this special time with their father. They knew he was very busy ministering to the people in the church and the community, but at this special time of the day, Dad was theirs - no interruptions allowed.

Sometimes Dad even got home a little early and they could play a quick game of catch-the-ball or look at an interesting new web site before eating. Occasionally a serious emergency came up and Dad didn't make it home for the evening meal, but the kids understood. Their father - the minister - must respond to a real emergency. Sometimes he was out of town on important business.

After mealtime, Jorge and Maria worshiped God as a family before going about their evening activities. Jorge generally visited church families, studied the Bible with interested families or attended committee meetings while

Maria helped the kids with their homework assignments and tucked the younger ones into bed. Jorge tried to get home by 9:30 p.m., in time to have a quiet conversation with one of the older kids and with Maria after the kids were in bed.

Things were quite different in Elena and Eduardo's home. Elena served a delicious evening meal, but she and the kids generally ate alone. Usually Eduardo thought he was too busy to come home to eat, so most evenings he grabbed some fast food and continued working on his sermon, helping a needy member of the congregation, or attending a committee until long after the children had gone to sleep. When he did make it home for the evening meal, he answered the cell phone repeatedly and often ate hurriedly, running out the door to an "emergency." Rarely was there time to play ball with the kids or hear about their day and generally Elena had worship with the kids without him. Eduardo's kids barely knew him.

Elena yearned for support with child rearing, but Eduardo thought he was too busy to be involved. Most of the time she had to deal with school assignments, misbehavior, worship with the kids, decisions about everyday issues, friends, sports, the Sabbath School Bible study guide, and much more. The list seemed endless. Sometimes Eduardo would get involved if there were a serious discipline problem. He was very strict, not inclined to listen to the child's point

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of view, and favored severe punishment.

Fast-forward fifteen years. What are the children from these two pastoral families doing? Do they love the Lord and are they serving Him? Or have they wandered away from God and want nothing to do with the church?

The best predictor of the parenting outcome of these two families is their parenting behavior, generally called parenting style. Hundreds of studies, beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 21st century, have explored the relationship between different parenting behaviors and many different outcomes in the lives of children.^{1,2}

Parenting style - the big picture of child rearing - is described by two main aspects of the parent-child relationship: Support (responsiveness to the child's needs) and control (demandingness, teaching, and discipline). The way parents support and control their children affects the atmosphere of the home and the emotional tone of family interaction, which influences everything else that happens in the family.

Support

On the diagram of the parenting styles the vertical line represents support which can range from very strong support at the upper end to an almost total lack at the other extreme (see Figure 1).

Supportive Parenting

Supportive parents are child-centered and responsive to their children's needs. They show much love, kindness, and tenderness to their children, hug and cuddle together, say "I love you" frequently, and use their child's love language often. They also notice when their child has had a difficult day and needs an extra dose of love by stopping what they're doing to "tune in" and listen. These parents eat, play, work, and pray with their children every day.

In a supportive home parents and children talk with each other a lot. Both know how the other feels, and the children understand the reasons for the family's standards. Parents respect and listen to their child's viewpoint

and show patience with childish mistakes and inconsistencies. They are tactful, sympathetic, understanding, and merciful with their children. An atmosphere of respect for each family member pervades the home. Independence and individuality are encouraged. Supportive parents are messengers of God's love to all their children.

Nonsupportive Parenting

Nonsupportive parents are generally centered on their own needs. Adult-centered parents give little consideration to the needs of the children - daily survival or parental power are what matter. The kids are rarely allowed to express an opinion because the parents are afraid of losing control or don't make time to listen. The parents don't show much sympathy and can be unpleasant, cold, and harsh with their children. They aren't very interested or involved in their kids' lives. Put-downs are common. Independence and individuality are taboo.

Emotional Climate of the Home

The support dimension of the parenting style and how the parents get along with each other create the emotional climate of the home, either a general atmosphere of warmth and caring or one of coldness and hostility. The emotional climate colors everything that happens in the home, giving family life an aura of joy and happiness or repression and sadness. It plays a significant role in whether children will accept or reject the religion and values of their parents.

Control

Control describes who's in charge of the family - the parents or the children. Control can vary from demanding, directive, high in control parenting to undemanding, low in control permissive parenting (see figure 1). Control also plays a role in acceptance or rejection of parental religion and values.

High Control Parenting

Directive, demanding parents establish limits for their children's behavior, explain the limits clearly, and answer any questions the kids may have. Then they consistently enforce these limits. They teach their kids to reason

and make age-appropriate decisions, and the kids get plenty of practice in decision-making. While these parents are firm and teach clear values to their family, they're reasonable and don't expect their kids to be perfect, even if they are the pastor's kids!

Self-control cuts both ways - parents must also be self-controlled. If they can't maintain their cool and calmly deal with the situation, they simply say, "We'll deal with this later." Then exit to pray for calmness and wisdom.

Who's in charge of the family? The parents.

Low Control Parenting

Indulgent, undemanding parents don't think kids need limits and guidance. "The kids need to express themselves" is a favorite line. Generally any behavior is OK. The limits they do try to establish are usually inconsistently enforced. The household has few rules and generally doesn't function on a schedule. Bedtime and mealtime are whenever the children want them. The parents make only weak or unpredictable attempts to teach the kids self-control, decision-making, or planning skills.

Who's in charge of the family? The kids.

Parenting Styles

The intersecting support and control dimensions identify four quadrants which define the four parenting styles: Authoritative-Communicative, Authoritarian, Permissive-Indulgent, and Indifferent-Neglectful. Each style is described by the quality and amount of support and control in the parent-child relationship. Let's begin with the best.

Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative-communicative parents are seeking to follow God's model for parenting: Unconditional love and grace, clear guidelines for moral values and behavior, disciplinary action when needed.³

Authoritative-communicative parents have a warm relationship with their children and are

considerate and attentive to their needs. Parents are firm, patient, loving, and reasonable. They teach their children to reason and make decisions.

The rights of both parents and children are respected. John, the pastor of a multi-church district, explained clearly to his children why the members of all his churches want to see his family at their church. It's important for the kids to sometimes go with him to each church. Most of the time they can stay at "their church" because the kids need to feel they belong and want to be with their friends.

The pastoral parents set clear standards and expect mature behavior. The limits are consistently enforced, so children know where the boundaries are. When punishment is needed, it is reasonable and well understood by their child. They don't expect cookie-cutter kids, after somebody's model of the "perfect pastor's kid". The children have choices, and independence and individuality are encouraged.

Authoritative-communicative parents are interested and involved in their children's lives. They know their kids' whereabouts, activities, and associates when away from home and they keep up with what is happening at school. Parents and children converse daily. The children know that their parents will listen, consider, and value their opinions.

The kids are securely bonded to their parents. Their moral development is strong and firm. They are confident, friendly, happy and cooperative, and enjoy personal self-respect and self-esteem. Usually they do well academically and are achievement-oriented and successful. Responsible and independent, they often show leadership skills.

Usually they choose to embrace the values and the religion of the pastoral family they grew up in. A strong, reasonable conscience enables them to generally have the strength to resist peer pressure and do what they know is right. Their God is the perfect blend of mercy and justice, a God who continually loves them and draws them closer to Himself.³

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parents are adult-centered, power-assertive, demanding and controlling, as well as rejecting, unresponsive, and non-communicative. They tend to rely too much on force and physical punishment. Communication between parents and children is usually one way - parents to children in stern commands the children are expected to obey without questioning. Parents rarely explain the reasons for their commands or allow their children to make decisions for themselves. They don't teach decision-making skills. There's very little loving support of the children.

Unfortunately, the authoritarian style is quite common among conservative religious families who justify their own actions by hiding behind a misconception of God's authority. It's easy for the pastoral family to unintentionally fall into this way of parenting. After all, isn't the minister the "voice of God" for the parishioners? It's quicker to command than to explain, teach, and dialog with the kids. In a too busy life, it's easy to become self-centered and take out one's frustrations on the family.

The children of authoritarian parents usually react in one of two ways: They either rebel against the values of their parents and get out of the home as soon as possible, or they become weak-willed, indecisive individuals incapable of dealing with difficult moral decisions. They don't have a strong conscience and are apt to embrace the negative values around them, or they may try to be "perfect," hoping to earn God's favor through their good works. Their God focuses on justice. Mercy and grace are not part of the picture.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive-indulgent parents have a warm relationship with their children and are very interested in their activities, but they are overly responsive to their children's needs. They are their children's friends, not their parents, so the kids develop their own values without parental guidance. Because the kids usually can do what they want, when they want, they become impulsive and egocentric.

They've never learned self-control, so moral and conscience development are weak. They have difficulty facing problems and working through tough situations. They prefer to do their "own thing." Their God is an accepting, loving God who looks the other way when humans misbehave. Sin isn't a major problem in the universe.

Indifferent-Neglectful Parenting

Indifferent-neglectful parents make few attempts to guide their children and basically ignore them. They're not committed to child rearing and have little interest in their child's needs. They may be physically abusive to their children and may not provide for their physical needs. Other parents may provide well for the physical needs of their children, but are too busy or too disinterested to be involved emotionally with their children or guide them.

Busy families with two professional careers can easily fall into this style. Often their children are given excessive freedom and unsupervised time too soon (premature autonomy). Recent research shows that remaining connected with families, especially father-youth connectedness, through middle school reduces substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, delinquency, and other problem behaviors during adolescence.⁴

The children of indifferent-neglectful parents are more likely to accept the negative values of society because their moral and spiritual development is weak. They tend to be delinquent and often have deep emotional problems related to the neglect they have experienced. Their God is a distant ruler of the universe who doesn't really care what happens on earth.

Successful Parenting

What is the secret to successful parenting? **Demonstrate the maximum amount of love with the right balance between independence and control.** Authoritative-communicative parenting is the model most resembling God's parenting style and is the most successful, according to decades of research.

Does authoritative parenting yield similar results in different cultures? The positive effects of authoritative, directive parenting are strong for every cultural group studied. Responsiveness or emotional closeness have cultural specific components. Children understand how their culture expresses closeness between parent and child. “Regardless of how specific cultural groups define and express responsiveness, the fundamental premise of the authoritative model that children need to feel loved, respected, and firmly guided while they are maturing into adults seems to be true for all children.”⁵

The parenting style used by their parents tends to influence people throughout life. Remembering their parents as authoritative is associated with a positive adjustment even with middle-aged and older adults.⁶

Parenting is learned behavior - we tend to parent like we were parented. The good news is that, with God’s help, parenting style can be changed. Many families I know are living proof that change is possible. The results of authoritative-communicative parenting are so superior to any other style that it is worth the effort. The future of your children and your grandchildren is at stake.

Notes

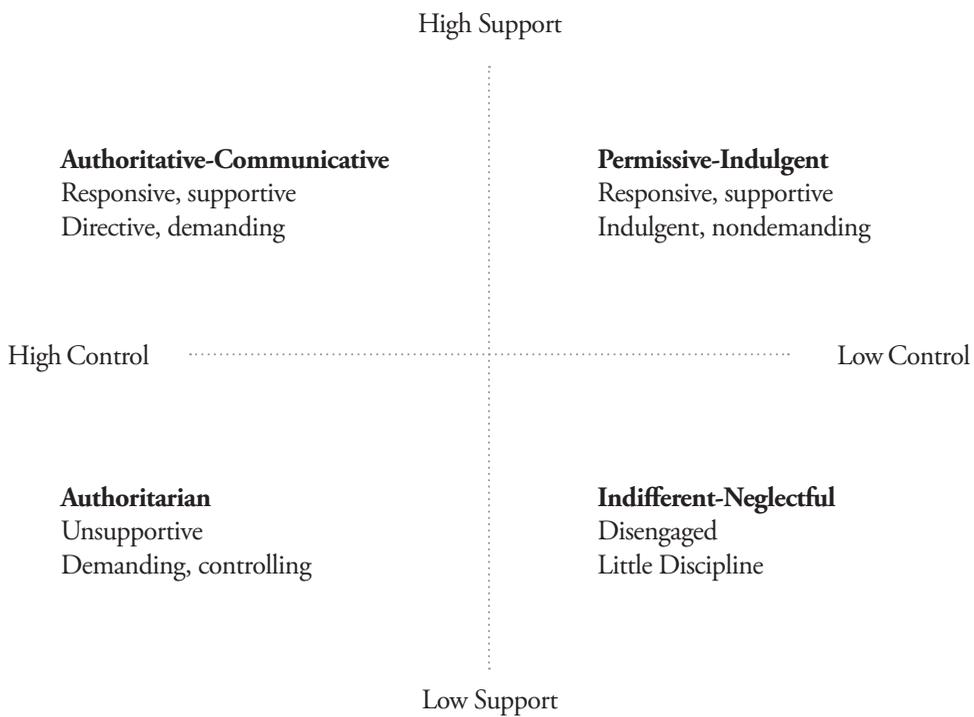
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- ² From antiquity God has described Himself as a parent, most often as a Father, but sometimes as a Mother. God’s “parenting style,” as described in Scripture, could be the model for the best of the parenting styles described in the contemporary research. Long before the parenting research began, Ellen White described parenting styles, using different names, but identifying the same parenting behaviors and their results in children’s character and spirituality. For starters, see Genesis 18:19; Psalm 103; Proverbs 3:11-12, 13:1, 13:24, 15:1, 15:5, 19:18,22:6, 22:15, and 29:15,17; Isaiah 49:13, 54:13 and 66:12,13; Luke 15:11-32; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20- 21; Hebrews 12:5-11; *The Adventist Home*, chapter 52 & p. 439:4; *Child Guidance*, chapters 41-49; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 155:2; Education, pp. 283, 287-297; *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 384:2, 391-392; *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 130-134; *Desire of Ages*, chapter 56; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 390-405; vol. 3, pp. 131-135, 531-532; vol. 4, pp. 362-363.
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PARENTING STYLES

Figure 1



Adapted from Maccoby & Martin (1983), Parke & Buriel (1998, 2006), Allen et al (2012), and Larzelere et al (2013).

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 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 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 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:

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: Fellowshiping

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 fellowshiped 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)

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How You Say It

ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER

Q - My husband and I don't have a very good marriage. The first few months after our wedding we had a lot of fun and got along quite well. Since then, things have gone south. We seem to disagree with each other in every conversation, and since the children arrived—we have two boys—it has just added to the stress in our marriage, and our lack of peaceful conversations with each other. If things don't get better between us soon, I may not be able to stay in this marriage much longer. Please help! We can't talk to each other anymore.

Michelle—Addison, Texas

A - Effective communication is essential to the survival of every marriage. If we were to look at marriage as a living organism, good communication would be like healthy blood running through every cell in the system to remain viable. And if marriage were a car engine, good communication would be like oil with enough viscosity to keep the parts well lubricated in order to function well.

One of the greatest challenges in married life—once the honeymoon is over—is for couples to engage in frequent conversation that is calm, civil, constructive, affirming,

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peaceful, and understanding. It is a delusion to believe getting along well before marriage means you will continue to do so after marriage. It is amazing how much stress, tension, and trouble a few dishes that need washing, bills that need paying, floors that need sweeping, and babies that need feeding can bring to an otherwise wonderful and blissful marriage.

Good communication is not a skill we often bring to marriage. Most of us came up in families in which voices were raised—sometimes more than just a little—when people disagreed with each other. This unfortunate legacy must be discarded to survive the rigors of real life in marriage.

There are two elements that are particularly important to having good communication in marriage, or any other meaningful relationship: making it clear and making it safe.

Quite frequently lack of clarity causes miscommunication in marriage. Many of the most heated arguments take place because a husband or wife failed to understand what his or her spouse meant to say, making things very unclear and leaving spouses very angry at each other.

Having a great marriage means that both husband and wife should be able to express their feelings, beliefs, concerns, and

preferences clearly without damaging the relationship in the process. For this to happen, each spouse must feel safe to share what is on his or her mind, which can be accomplished only in an environment in which each spouse is careful about not hurting the feelings of the other.

To accomplish these two important concepts that are essential to great communication, there should be an agreement to: 1. Listen first and talk second. 2. Resist the urge to defend yourself. 3. Paraphrase what your spouse is saying to make sure you understand each other and are on the same page. 4. Share the process so you both have an opportunity to listen and speak to each other. 5. Pray for patience, a

willing heart to resolve your differences to satisfaction, and a desire to give honor and glory to God in the process.

The Bible states in Proverbs 25:11: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” Determine that every time you speak to your spouse it will be like giving him a gift of gold and silver, so your conversation with each other will find new joy and peace, and be a blessing to your children and their children

Reference

Keith E. Whitfield et al., *Fighting for Your African American Marriage* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), p. 49.

I Messed Up! Can I Get My Family Back?

ELAINE AND WILLIE OLIVER

A year ago I confessed to my wife that I had had several affairs during our 10 years of marriage. In the last year I have been totally faithful to my wife, but she still doesn't trust me. We've tried counseling, but my wife has not been able to get over my unfaithfulness, although she says she has forgiven me. We are now separated, and she wants a divorce. I have been attending a recovery group for addictive behaviors and have come to realize how deeply I've wounded my wife, my children, and even myself. Is there hope for me to get my family back?

John—Chicago, Illinois

As long as there is life, there is hope—"with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). With that said, it is important for you to understand that an affair, or affairs, are devastating to a marriage and often leave a marriage so fragile it cannot sustain such a heavy blow. It is emotionally confusing for the injured spouse and leaves that person feeling betrayed and abandoned. Your wife is experiencing deep pain, hurt, isolation, guilt, and shame, and feels she can never trust you again.

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Marriage experts assert that it takes approximately two years for the injured spouse to grieve the loss of innocence in their marriage and heal from the wounds caused by an affair. Forgiveness does not take away the pain or the consequences of such an injury. Even when wounds heal, scars remain. Once trust has been broken and sexual infidelity leaves an incredibly deep wound, it will take a lifetime of intentional commitment to restore that relationship.

We firmly believe God can heal any marriage, including one that has suffered the damage of many affairs. In our society, including the Christian community, we have been led to believe that once there is adultery, it's natural or inevitable to get a divorce. While the Bible allows for divorce when there has been adultery, if both spouses (especially the injured spouse) are willing to work hard, a marriage can be healed and restored. In fact, not only can a marriage survive, it can thrive. Regardless of why you had affairs, there are usually underlying issues that can contribute to spousal betrayal. Many of these issues may stem from unresolved loss, pain, abuse, or abandonment. When an individual does not deal with past hurts or certain unfulfilled needs from their early years, those issues follow them into future relationships. Many jump into marriage hoping it will solve

their problems or relational gaps left from childhood. When those needs aren't met in marriage, many try to get those needs met elsewhere.

You must find a good Christian therapist who can help you sort through and identify the issues that led to your unfaithfulness. Ask the Lord to soften your wife's heart and let her know you are sincerely interested in doing whatever it takes to be a better husband and father. In humility, ask her if she can hold off from filing for a divorce while you try to get help with your issues. You must not intimidate, force, or threaten her to take you back. Even if there were things you feel she did in your marriage to hurt or humiliate you, you must remain calm and patient with her.

At some point your counselor will most likely ask your wife to attend sessions with you or alone. Your wife should also seek individual counseling, but you should not be the one to tell her. Continue to pray without ceasing, study Scripture, and read some books, or search

online to find out how marriage can heal from an affair. God promises in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." You can expect the process to be painfully slow. However, if you are willing to invest the time and effort, your family may be restored.

Of course, even with all your good intentions, your family may not be restored to what it was before. We still encourage you to go through the process of becoming your best self with the help of your counselor and God. We would also urge you and your wife to work through your marital issues and take steps toward true forgiveness of each other since divorce does not solve problems—it leaves them in a pile so every time you come to that spot you stumble over them. To continue to coparent your children for future health you and your wife would want to work things out to give them a fighting chance in their own future relationships. We are praying for your success!

BOOK REVIEWS

100 Creative Worship Ideas for Busy Families

KAREN HOLFORD

Pacific Press Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho, 2014

128 pages

REVIEWED BY SARINA GOULDING

Family worship is essential in the life of any Christian household. It is important that the families take time together to get closer to God and each other through prayer and worship. But how does a busy family go about this? What are practical ways of engaging in family worship with every member of the family? Karen Holford offers practical and creative ideas for the family on the go in her book, *100 Creative Worship Ideas for Busy Families*.

Throughout the book, Holford tackles the issue of having daily family worship by providing parents with exciting ways to make Jesus real to their families. The introduction shows parents how to help their children grow spiritually along with guidelines for great family worships. She suggests making a worship supply box full of items that will assist in the different activities throughout the book. Everything from a Bible to balloons are listed as creative tools to bring family worship to life! Practical solutions for the busy family fill the pages of this helpful book.

Sarina Goulding, is a graduate of Oakwood University and when she wrote this piece was a Summer Intern in the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

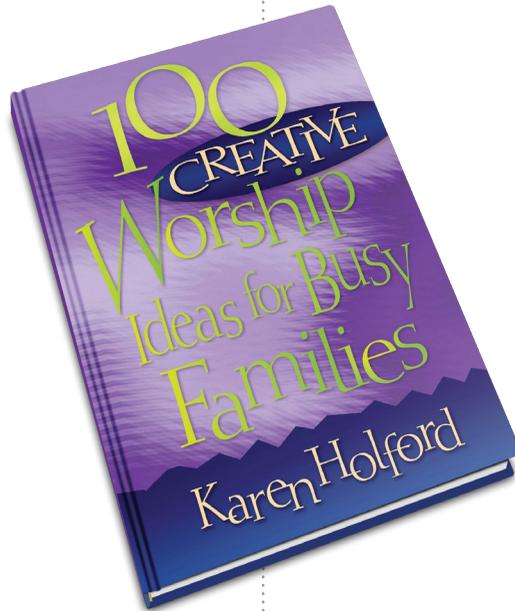
As a recent college graduate, who does not yet have a family of her own, I find that this book is for everyone. Anyone who gets their hands on a copy can apply the principles provided in this book. The activities are versatile and can be done with any type of family. The more time goes by the more I realize that life just continue to get busier. This book helps people of all ages to make their time with God intentional and fun. As I grow and learn I find that finding resources are necessary to glean a new perspective. Holford fosters conversation through practical application and creativity.

Holford points out this very crucial point, “Recent research has helped us to understand that 70-90 percent of adult Christians first accepted Jesus as their Savior before the age of 13. So, it’s 10 times easier to lead a child to Christ than an adult. This means that one of the most important jobs in the world is helping children make their decision to follow Christ.” [See <http://www.barnaresearch.org>]. Holford gives a launching pad for creative worships. The 100 ideas presented are an amazing place to start as children and parents alike broaden their scope and find joy and fellowship in daily worship.

Holford adds this important statement as she discusses the importance of winning children, “Our responsibility as parents is to work hand-in-hand with the Holy Spirit to make sure that nothing in our power is stopping the children from coming to Jesus and accepting His gift of salvation. Then, once they have accepted Jesus, we need to continue working with the Holy Spirit to affirm their decision and nurture their simple trust into a strong and mature faith.”

In our day and age families need ways to make such an important part of the

Christian life a consistent part of what they do on a daily basis. Family worship is key part of “training up a child” in a world that is seeking to influence our children. This book is creative, practical, easy to use and perfect for any busy family seeking to make Jesus Christ the center of their home. Nothing is more important that a relationship with God and what better place to encourage this than in the home. From worships that lead children to Jesus to getting a better understanding of the Ten Commandments, everyone can be involved in learning more about God.



Praying Like Crazy For Your Husband

TAMYRA HORST

Pacific Press Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho, 2010

127 Pages

REVIEWED BY ROSEMAY CANGY

Prayer provides an opportunity for wives to pray for their husbands like no one else will on this earth, so that their husbands can be all that God wants them to be. The author of *Praying Like Crazy for Your Husband*, Tamyra Horst, believes that the most loving action wives can do for their husbands is to pray like crazy for them because they know their gifts, struggles and understand their hopes and dreams. This is not easy when the couple is going through conflicts and challenges; the author shares moments in her life when conflicts were a hindrance to her prayers. At those times she says, we should ensure that we don't pray selfish prayers but that we partner with God and ask him to us show ways in which we should pray for our partners. This partnership with God will result in closeness in the marriage and closeness to God.

Horst outlines the difference between loving your husband in a way that honors and respects him and loving him in a selfish way that is focused on changing him to your

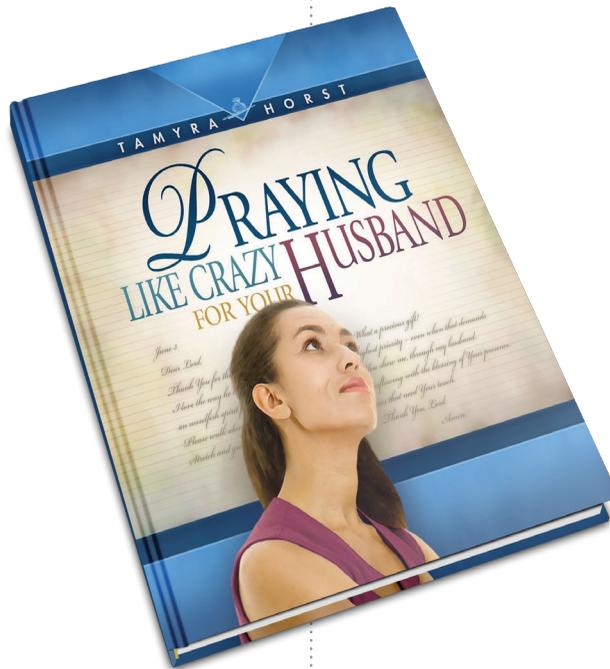
standards. The first step is to pray that God will guide you to love your husband well in the way that he wants to be loved. Men feel loved when they feel respected and wives may need to pray that God will prompt them to appreciate their uniqueness in their roles as husbands, fathers and friends. Secondly she highlights the importance of taking care of oneself. To be who God wants you to be as an individual, you need to take time to nurture yourself and enjoy the things you like while investing time in growing your relationship with God. This can be through building friendships with godly friends or taking time to know God intimately.

Horst states that disagreements in marriage can result in conflicts that will create obstacles between the couple. She relates her personal experiences when she has had to pray hard for wisdom from God at a time when she was mad at her husband. She says that she opened her heart to God even while she was complaining and venting and God answered her prayer by giving her better understanding of the challenging situation and changing her heart. It is important to lean on God; to be transparent about what you are feeling

and to put pride aside in those moments. When you are in the middle of a struggle, you can stop and fight the real enemy on your knees together with your husband and allow God to use this moment to draw you closer together.

At the end of each chapter Horst provides the reader with a helpful guide on what to specifically pray for. She also invites

the reader to journal their experiences and thoughts as they are praying for their husbands. On a personal note, this book has been helpful in highlighting the significance of praying earnestly and specifically for my husband's needs. God wants to safeguard our marriages for his glory and I have been challenged to go on a deeper journey with God in praying like crazy for my husband.



APPENDIX A

FAMILY MINISTRIES

IMPLEMENTATION

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

Note:

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

A Family Ministries Policy and Purpose Statement

The congregation and staff of the

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

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

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

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

- Workers should immediately report to the pastor or administration any behaviors or other incidents that seem abusive or inappropriate. Upon notification, appropriate actions will be taken and reports made in compliance with the operating procedure of these policies.
 - Guidelines for volunteers who work with your and children will be provided to each volunteer.
 - Children shall not be allowed to roam around the church without adult supervision. Parents are responsible for supervising their children before and after Sabbath School.
 - No child should be released to use the restroom unless accompanied by a parent or older sibling.
 - A responsible adult shall be designated to circulate in and around the church, including parking areas to provide security. This is critical when only one adult is present at some activities for minors, such as a Sabbath School division.
 - Any discipline shall occur within the visual contact of another adult. All forms of corporal punishment are strictly prohibited.
 - All meetings for children or youth must have the approval of the pastor and/or church board, especially overnight activities. Minors must have signed parental permission for each trip, including emergency medical treatment release.
 - If there is a known sex offender attending a church, a deacon or other responsible adult shall be assigned to monitor the person while on the premises or at off-site church activity. The offender shall be informed of the procedure. If a sex offender transfers to or attends another church, the leadership of that church shall be notified.
- Taken from Family Ministries Southeastern California Conference 2002.

The Family Ministries Leader

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

3. Survey family needs and interests in the congregation. The needs assessment survey and family profile sheet may be used to help determine the needs of the congregation.
4. Plan programs and activities for the year that may include video presentations, retreats or special speakers who present workshops and seminars. Plans should also include simple activities that may be suggested to families through the church bulletin or newsletter.
5. Work with the pastor and church board to be sure plans are included in the local church budget.
6. Make use of the resources available from the conference family ministries department. These can save time, energy and serve to keep costs down for the local congregation. When planning for special presentations, the conference family ministries director is able to assist in finding interesting and qualified presenters.
7. Communicate with the congregation. Family ministries should not be perceived simply as an annual event. Keep the importance of good family skills alive by use of posters, the church newsletter and/or bulletin throughout the year.
8. Share your plans with the conference family ministries director.

1. Develop and chair a small family ministries committee that reflects the distinctiveness of the congregation. It may include a single parent, young married persons, mid-life families, retired, widowed or divorced persons. People who serve on this committee should be carefully chosen as visionary people reflecting the grace of God.
2. Be a family advocate. Family ministries is not merely program-oriented, but must look at the whole church program with sensitivity to its impact on families. In some situations the family ministries leader may need to advocate for family time. In other words, there may be so many programs going on in a congregation that people have little time to live their own lives as families.

What is a Family?

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

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

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

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

Committee and Planning Guidelines

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

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

- What do you like best about your family?

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

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

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

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

A Good Presentation Will Do Four Things

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

Handouts

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

Introduction

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

The Ten Commandments of Presentations

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

Family Life Profile Survey

Name Date of Birth

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

Gender: M F

Address

Telephone (Home) (Work)

Baptized SDA Yes No

If Yes, local church membership

If No, what is your religious background/present affiliation?

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Marital status:

Single, never married

Single, divorced

Single, widowed

Married—Spouse’s name Date of Birth

Spouse is SDA—Local church membership

Spouse is not SDA—Present religious affiliation

Children whose primary residence is with you:

Name Birthdate

Grade in school School attending

Baptized SDA? Local church membership

Name Birthdate

Grade in school School attending

Baptized SDA? Local church membership

Children whose primary residence is elsewhere:

Name Birthdate
 Baptized SDA? Local church membership

Name Birthdate
 Baptized SDA? Local church membership

Other family members living with you:

Name Birthdate
 Baptized SDA? Local church membership
 Family Relationship

Name Birthdate
 Baptized SDA? Local church membership
 Family Relationship

What is the most significant thing the Family Ministries Committee could do this year to address the interests/needs of your family?

.....

I am interested in Family Ministries and am willing to help by

- Telephoning as needed
- Participating in planning sessions
- Providing transportation
- Preparation for events
- Help with meals/refreshments
- Child care
- Advertising
- Other

Presenting lectures/classes/seminars/workshops or other presentations Your interest area(s)

.....

Family Life Profile

Church Date

Family Category

Active Members

- With Children Under 18
- No Children Under 18

Inactive Members

- With Children Under 18
- No Children Under 18

Married—Spouse is a Member

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

Married—Spouse is a Non-member

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

Single—Never Married

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

Single—Divorced

- Ages 18-30
- Ages 31-50
- Ages 51-60
- Ages 61-70
- Ages 71 +

Family Ministries Interest Survey

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

Gender: M F

From the topics below, please select the five that are of most interest to you.

Place a check in front of each one you select:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship and devotional life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline in the home | <input type="checkbox"/> Single adult living |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting teenagers | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving self-worth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for childbirth | <input type="checkbox"/> Resolving anger and conflict |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce recovery | <input type="checkbox"/> Television and media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical dependency issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enriching your marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Blended families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grief recovery | <input type="checkbox"/> Death and dying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding temperaments | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with widowhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list): | |

Suggested guest speakers/presenters:

Name

Address Telephone

Area(s) of specialty

What time of the day and what day of the week is best for you to attend a 1-1/2 - 2 hour program on one of the above topics? (Check the appropriate periods.)

	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Morning	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Evening	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Community Family Life Education Survey

1. What do you believe is the number one problem facing families in this community right now?

.....

2. Would you consider attending any of these Family Life Seminars if they were offered in this area? (Select as many as you wish.)

- How to Handle Conflict
- Communication in Marriage
- Marriage Enrichment or Encounter
- Understanding Children
- Self-Esteem
- Parenting Skills
- Dealing with Teenagers
- Childbirth Preparation Class
- Other (Please specify)
- Divorce Recovery
- Stress Management
- Overcoming Loneliness Weekend
- Family Finances
- Grief Recovery
- Time Management and Life Priorities
- Planning Retirement

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3. What time of the day and what day of the week is best for you to attend a 1-1/2 - 2 hour program on one of the above topics? (Check the appropriate periods.)

	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Morning	<input type="radio"/>						
Afternoon	<input type="radio"/>						
Evening	<input type="radio"/>						

4. It will help strengthen this survey if we could obtain the following information about you:

Sex: M F

Age: (Please circle the appropriate group.)

17 or under 19-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71+

Do you have children under 18 years of age in your home? Yes No

Are you:

- Never married
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Remarried after divorce

Sample Evaluation

1. What inspired you most about this workshop?

.....

2. What did you learn that you didn't know before?

.....

3. Were the concepts in this workshop presented in a clear manner?

.....

4. Which activity/section was of least value to you?

.....

5. How could this workshop be improved?

.....

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being generally dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how would you rate this workshop? Circle one.

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Generally
Dissatisfied | Somewhat
Dissatisfied | Somewhat
Satisfied | Generally
Satisfied | Very
Satisfied |

7. Who made this evaluation?

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

Gender: M F

Marital Status:

- Never married Married
 Separated Divorced
 Widowed

How long have you been married, divorced, separated or widowed?

.....years months

Thank you for your honest comments, they will help us in planning future workshops!

APPENDIX B

VOTED STATEMENTS

An Affirmation of Marriage

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing

child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

Statement on Home and Family

The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility.

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The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity.

Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, stated: "The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov.4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." -The Ministry of Healing, p. 349.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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