

REVIVAL & REFORMATION

Families
REACHING OUT

Willie and Elaine Oliver

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Preface

One of the most widely used Ellen White quotations in Adventist Family Ministries during the past 15 years is found in p. 32 of *The Adventist Home*: “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.”

This statement simply grabs your attention and challenges you as a family and/or ministry leader to examine your home to see if it can pass this very high behavioral bar. We must admit to invariably feeling less than worthy of this very high standard for our own family and it is possible many of you also feel the same way.

We urge you—as we also talk to ourselves—not to allow this statement to intimidate you or to have you develop feelings of guilt about your own family. Rather, receive this charge as a description of a model God has left for His disciples who take to heart the gospel commission of sharing the good news of salvation.

When it comes to sharing what God is all about, what we do is so much more powerful than what we say. This is where we all “need to be like little children” and return to an elementary way of sharing our learning through the proverbial notion of ‘show and tell.’ We share what we know by what people see in us rather than what they hear from us about Jesus. Some one once said: “Preach the gospel everyday. Use words if necessary.”

Our principal evangelistic thrust for the 2010–2015 quinquennium is the Family-to-Family campaign. It is a model that every family in our church can adopt as their own to reach out to their neighbors, relatives, and friends. It is our desire that together with this resource—*Families Reaching Out*—and the Family-to-Family campaign, our imaginations will capture what can be accomplished by way of sharing the good news of salvation through the power and grace of Jesus Christ.

We hope the sermons, workshops, stories, leadership resources and reprinted articles in this volume, will help families to sense the urgency of the need to reach out, and make the necessary preparations within our families each day to be used by God for the salvation of many.

For stronger and healthier families,

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How to Use This Planbook

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

Christian Home and Marriage Week: February 9-16

Christian Home and Marriage Week occurs in February embracing two Sabbaths: Christian Marriage Day which emphasizes Christian marriage and Christian Home Day which 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 9, (Emphasizes Marriage)

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

Christian Home Day: Sabbath, February 16, (Emphasizes Parenting)

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

Family Togetherness Week: September 1-7

Family Togetherness Week is scheduled the first week in September, beginning with the first 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 7 (Emphasizes the Church Family)

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

Within this planbook you will find sermons, mini-seminars, children's stories as well as leadership resources and sermons, 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 tips for success as a family ministries leader.

This resource also includes a disk with Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations of the mini-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.





Choosing A Winning Response

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

The Texts: Proverbs 17:27; James 1:19

Introduction

Last February we were in South Africa for two weeks to speak at several events for the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. On our road trip from Mossel Bay to Cape Town, our hosts suggested we visit the Cango Caves.

The Cango Caves are located at the foothills of the Swartberg mountain range near the town of Oudtshoorn, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. At the caves there is a standard tour and an *adventure tour*. The *adventure tour* consists of climbing up steep rock formations and crawling through narrow passages, the most challenging of them a little less than 12 inches in diameter.

That Friday morning we arrived at the Cango Caves a little before noon just as a tour was about to begin. Noticing the following tour was an hour away, and wanting to get to Cape Town before sunset, we hurriedly purchased tickets and joined the tour that was taking off. Being unaware of the two options, we were several minutes into the tour when we realized we had chosen the *adventure tour*. The tour was true to its name by way of complexity, challenge, difficulty, and inconvenience.

Close relationships and especially marriage are a lot like the experience we had at the Cango Caves. The people outside the caves appeared excited about what they were getting ready to experience. The people inside—living the challenge and inconvenience of a damp, dark, dangerous, and restricted space—seemed in a hurry and anxious to get out.

We had to remain alert, careful, determined, focused, and positive to make it through the adventure tour. The truth is, once inside the belly of the caves there was no turning back.

Today we will explore a few realities about marriage and other important relationships; the choices we must make to navigate the often challenging, inconvenient, complex, and rough waters of these relationships, and arrive safely to the other shore by the grace, mercies and power of God.

The Bible on Relationships

In the book of Proverbs 17:27, the word of God declares: “He who has knowledge spares His words, *And* a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.”

Sometimes the Book of Proverbs seems to value nothing so much as appropriate words. This is because it views words as the index to the soul. By paying attention to what a person says (and indeed to how much he or she says), one can determine whether a person is wise or a fool. Words are the fruit that show the quality of the heart (Garrett 2001).

In James 1:19, the author offers, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

Christians can pretend to obey God without truly listening to his commands. The readers of James’s letter knew the transforming power of God’s Word, the gospel. James urged them to demonstrate this change, particularly in their speech. He began by courteously addressing them as my dear brothers, and then challenged them to be *quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*. The commands probably refer both to our relationships to one another and to God. We are to be quick to hear and slow to talk both toward other people and toward God

The command to be *quick to listen*, calls for an eagerness to hear and obey God’s message. The appeal to be *slow to speak*, demands silence until we have understood and applied the message. It is a call for restraint lest we produce hasty, ill-timed reactions. The challenge to be *slow to become angry* warns against hostile, bitter feelings. We cannot hear God if we remain distracted with resentment, hatred, or vengeful attitudes.

Our society encourages us to express our feelings, whether good or bad, peaceful or inflammatory, godly or ungodly. James 1:19, however, pictures the wise person as one who listens to God and others, deliberates a response carefully, and answers with cautious words (Lea 1999).

Empirical Research on Relationships

According to investigation done by marriage researchers Howard J Markman, Scott M Stanley, and Susan L Blumberg, there are four patterns that have been identified in marriages that are unhappy: escalation, negative interpretations, invalidation, and withdrawal and avoidance.

Escalation is when one spouse says something that is not very nice; then the other spouse responds by saying something even worse about the other. Before soon they are both screaming at each other, and what was a relatively harmless conversation has now turned into a marriage in serious distress. The difference between unhappy couples and happy couples is the way they handle this pattern. Happy couples know how to identify escalation before it takes place and simply remain quiet until the storm is passed.

Negative Interpretations is another pattern that destroys the stability of a marriage. One of the spouses makes a statement or a gesture, and it is interpreted more negatively by

the other spouse than it was meant to be. Happy couples tend to give each other the benefit of the doubt, and when in doubt ask for clarification rather than thinking the worst.

Invalidation is another pattern that characterizes unhappy couples. This is when the husband or the wife puts down their spouse in subtle or not so subtle ways, dismissing the other person's wants, needs, and emotional wellbeing.

One can invalidate one's spouse simply by constantly talking over them; putting down anything they say; taking their feelings for granted; for example, the couple is getting ready to go out to eat and the husband says: "Sweetie, I'd like to have Mexican food tonight." And the wife without missing a beat says: "Let's try the new Thai restaurant that opened on Main street a few weeks ago."

Or the wife says after coming home late from work: "I am so tired! I've been on my feet all day taking care of customers at the store, and the traffic was horrendous." And, without skipping a beat or acknowledging his wife's feelings, the husband says: "I am also very tired." While it is not wrong to be tired, it is a problem not to acknowledge your spouse's feelings and begin talking about your own.

After a while, communication will break down, the husband or wife disconnects from the relationship, and another family becomes the casualty of a marriage gone sour that could have been prevented.

Withdrawal and Avoidance is the last of these four patterns identified by the University of Denver marriage researchers we mentioned before. This is when one of the spouses totally disengages from the relationship by avoiding the other one as often as possible, because it is simply too painful to deal with a disconnected spouse (Markman, et al., 2001, pp. 13-31).

John M Gottman, noted marriage and family researcher suggests *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*:

Be familiar with each other's worlds. Do something to nurture that closeness every day. Know her likes and dislikes. What he likes to eat and what he dislikes about Christmas. Be emotionally intelligent; high EQ, instead of just a high IQ.

Nurture your fondness and admiration for each other. We like to flirt with each other when we are leaving home in the morning. It is our way of conveying our love and admiration for each other.

Turn toward each other instead of away from each other. Talk to each other instead of turning to Facebook for voyeuristic enjoyment. Pay attention to your wife. Pay attention to your husband. Talk about silly things together. The fact that you are engaging each other in conversation will connect you and make your marriage stronger.

Allow your partner to influence you. Develop habits that got there because your spouse influenced you. It flatters your spouse; it connects you to each other. It is a part of the glue that keeps you together.

Solve your solvable problems. Not every issue between you needs to be solved. If you have been married for 10 or 15 year you will never be young like when you first got married. Get over it. You have each other. Don't sweat the small stuff. The truth is; it is all small stuff compared to the love God has given you in each other. When you talk about the solvable problems, "soften the start up." Since women are more likely to want to solve the problems, avoid nagging and insulting your husband when you approach the issue. The first few seconds of a conversation will determine how the rest of it will go. Begin with sweetness. You will achieve much more with that kind of attitude.

Overcome gridlock. We all have things we don't really like about our spouse. Welcome to the human race. You didn't marry a perfect man or woman. Neither did your spouse. There are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. Get over it.

I (Willie) had arthroscopic knee surgery 18 years ago to repair a torn meniscus. It got better after surgery, but every now and then it still hurts. Guess what? I don't go in the back room and cut off my leg because it isn't perfect, I've learned to live with it as best I can. It is my knee.

Often there is gridlock in our relationships because someone doesn't like peas, or Indian food, or watching football. Accept the differences and decide to work with what you have chosen. You've heard the saying: "If life gives you lemons, make lemonade." We know many individuals who married people who turned out to be lemons. Hey, make lemonade, and life will be much better than it has been for the past several years. Choose a different attitude, a different response, a winning response, and the situation will become bearable.

Of course, we are not talking about being abused by your spouse, or that you should get used to your spouse cheating on you. These are issues that should not exist in a marriage. If they are present one should get professional help to remove the offending habit. But don't throw away your marriage because he doesn't look like he did 20 years ago.

Create shared meaning. Invariably people marry each other but live separate lives. They never engage in each other's special pass times; don't worship together; don't read the same books or enjoy the same cuisine. He loves the mountains; she loves the beach; and they do vacations separately.

If you have the first six principles you will have a good marriage. To have a great marriage you will need to create a culture that's just between the two of you. It's the kind of stuff that binds you together; that has a rhythm only the two of you understand.

The wise man, Solomon, and the writer of James, both have prescriptions for improving and maintaining healthy relationships—whether in marriage; between parents and children; adult siblings; church board members; or any other meaningful relationships in our lives (Gottman 1999).

The Bible and Empirical Research Agree

Solomon declares in Proverbs 17:27: “He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.” And James 1:19, 20 submits: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” These verses truly summarize what the researchers above found in their investigations about relationships.

Many years ago when he was our pastor in Washington, DC, Dr. John Nixon expounded in one of his Sabbath sermons: “When you are working on your marriage, you are working on your salvation.”

And it was Ellen White who indicated under inspiration:

“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 of bliss; the family, a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven” (White, 1952, p. 28).

Conclusion

Despite the complexity, challenge, difficulty, and inconvenience of going through the Cango Caves in South Africa—once we made it through the experience—we felt a sense of accomplishment, completion, success and triumph. There was a sense of purpose and pride.

During the challenging and difficult places in the caves, we said to ourselves many times: “We will never do this again! This is insane! I will never like the Cango Caves on Facebook!” Once on the other side, however; after the victory; the challenge felt achievable, doable, feasible, and probable. We knew we could do this again!

In the book of Colossians 2: 9, 10, the Word of God declares: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

In response to these verses of Scripture, Charles H Spurgeon, the great British preacher of the 19th century acknowledged: “All the attributes of Christ, as God and man, are at our disposal. All the fullness of the Godhead, whatever that marvelous term may mean, is ours to make us complete” (Spurgeon, 2006 [May 18]).

Yes, our brothers and sisters, close relationships of any kind, including relationships among church members, as well as relationships in marriage and family are complex, challenging, difficult, and at times inconvenient. However, we should always choose a winning response and know that the grace, mercy, and power of God are at our disposal, so we can claim the victory, and rebuke Satan as a liar.

We urge you to trust God today, so that despite the trouble among members of the church family, your marriage or relationship with your children or other family members, you will not see this as an situation to get out of, but as an opportunity to

choose a response that will bring calm, joy, and peace to the church, to your home, and a witness to the matchless power of Jesus.

May God help us to this end is our prayer.

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Creating a Masterpiece

By Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

Introduction

Michelangelo is quoted as saying, “Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.” It must be a marvelous experience to look at a block of stone and see what it could become. It must also be a wonderful thing to have the ability to take that piece of rock and fashion it to whatever we envision it to be. To chip away and remove the unnecessary pieces and free the final sculpture hidden inside.

But not every one of us is that talented. For some of us, when we look at a block of marble all we see is . . . a block of marble. And even if we envision what the block of marble could be, few of us have the talent or the ability to turn the marble into a masterpiece.

As parents, we have been given the opportunity to create a masterpiece with each of the children God has given us. As that precious, helpless little baby is born, we behold something more precious and valuable than all the marble in the world. And God has already begun the work of creating a masterpiece out of that bundle of flesh, blood, and love. Through the prophet Jeremiah God declares: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5, NKJV)

David described this wonderful process with poetic words: “For You formed my inward parts;

“You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret. . . Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.” (Psalms 139:13-16, NKJV)

So, how can we as parents help create a masterpiece with our children’s lives? How can we help our children grow to be mature disciples of Jesus Christ?

Reach out Spiritually

One of the earliest and most direct passages in the Bible dealing with parenting is found in Deuteronomy 6:1-6. As the Israelites prepare to go into the land God had promised to give them as their inheritance, Moses reminds them of all they had seen and been taught for the last forty years. Since he would not be crossing the Jordan River with them, Moses provides them with all the instructions they need to not simply move to a new home, but with their children receive God's blessings and approval. So, Moses begins with the most important of spiritual beliefs: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (v.4)

This is the solemn declaration Christians make to this day. We don't worship many deities, as some pagan religions do; we worship ONE God! Moses continues by explaining what worshipping God means: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." (v.5)

Worship is not simply accepting a set of doctrines, following a list of rules, or behaving in a prescribed way. To worship God means to love him from the depths of our heart and soul until that love inundates our whole being and overflows toward others.

And then Moses gives parents their gospel commission:

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 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. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (vs.7-9)

Moses didn't give these instructions to the priests or the Levites or the leaders, but to all the parents then and now. It is our responsibility, as parents, to disciple our children, to help shape in them the image of God. This spiritual shaping happens when we talk with them about God, when we teach them about God's love and His sacrifice for them, when we display through words and actions His love flowing from and through us. While Moses speaks of formal teaching, he also speaks of the common conversations, the daily routines, the mundane acts, all of which should be permeated with the presence of God.

Comparing children's growth with that of Jesus', Ellen White writes: "The physical constitution of Jesus, as well as His spiritual development, is brought before us in these words, "the child grew," and "increased in stature." In childhood and youth attention should be given to physical development. Parents should so train their children in good habits of eating and drinking, dressing, and exercise, that a good foundation will be laid for sound health in afterlife. The physical organism should have special care, that the powers of the body may not be dwarfed, but developed to their full extent. This places the children and youth in a favorable position, so that, with proper religious training, they may, like Christ, wax strong in spirit." (White, 1954, p. 187).

Ben Freudenburg cites studies that show four family practices that are particularly important in helping young people grow in faith (both in childhood and adolescence): (1) talking about faith with their mother; (2) talking about faith with their father; (3) having family devotions or prayer; and (4) doing family projects to help other people. Unfortunately, he writes, fewer than one-third of the youth reported any of these activities as happening often in the past or currently in their homes. (Freudenburg, B., and Lawrence, R., 1998, p. 17) George Barna's research affirms that in a typical week fewer than ten percent of parents who attend church regularly with their kids read the Bible together, pray together, or have family worship together. (Barna, G., 2002, p. 78).

The Valuegenesis* studies conducted among Adventist young people also confirm the important role the parents play in transmitting their faith to their children not only by talking about their faith but by joining their children in participating in service projects in their community or missionary endeavors. (Bailey Gillespie, Donahue, Gane, and Boyatt, 2004, pp. 255-273). We cannot underestimate the importance of daily family worship, Bible study, and praying on a regular basis. If we are to bring the best image of God in our children, we need to make sure these three practices are a part of our daily family life.

*Valuegenesis" is a research study into the faith and values of young people attending Seventh-day Adventist high schools in North America in the three areas of family, school and church. The first survey was conducted in 1990, a second major survey was conducted in 2000, and a third is taking place in 2010. Related studies also termed "Valuegenesis" have been conducted in other countries.

Reach out to your children spiritually.

Reach out Emotionally

Parents have the God-given responsibility to disciple their children so they can become disciples of Jesus Christ; children of God by their own choice. Our task as parents also involves helping shape the emotions of our children. A good self-image is one of the most important variables we can build into our children. A person's self-image is based not only on how they see themselves but also on how they perceive others, particularly those closest to them, see them. That's why what parents say to their children and how they act toward their children will contribute in great measure to their poor or healthy self-image.

Dr. Ed Young says there are at least ten building blocks to establish a child's self-image, enabling them to see themselves as God sees them.

1. We must express love to our children. That sounds so basic, but sadly enough many children never hear their parents say "I love you." You can't say it too much.
2. Be predictable. Children need stability, not constant change. Be consistent in your discipline, in your expectations, in your standards, and in your love.
3. Communicate clearly with your children. Do not expect them to read your mind. Remember that young children take things quite literally and do not understand

- nuances or subtleties as adults do. Speak clearly, in concrete terms, and only in short sentences which are enough for them to understand and absorb.
4. In addition, try to understand the source of behavior problems, instead of dealing only with the symptoms. Don't simply react to what they do but try to understand why they're doing it.
 5. Catch your children doing good! Sometimes the only attention children get is when they do something that gets them in trouble. Positive attention is better than negative attention; but negative attention is better than no attention at all! So, don't wait to catch your children when they're doing something wrong; catch them doing the right thing, and praise them for it.
 6. Provide a safe environment, emotionally and physically. Make your home a safe place for your child. The last four building blocks are just as important as the previous six.
 7. Set reasonable limits based on your child's age and development.
 8. Teach your child problem-solving skills. Don't do everything for them. It is normal for parents to want to help their children, but children, like all of us, also learn by trial and error. If they are never allowed to make mistakes they will never learn from them.
 9. Don't overreact. Ninety-nine percent of the things we parents lose our cool over are not life-altering. Stop to think for a moment if what they did warrants a huge reaction on your part. Remember these words: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1, NKJV).
 10. Finally, be patient. Parenting is a long-term effort, and you cannot achieve all that you hope for in a day.

If you remember these things and strive each day to do them - with a word, a look, a touch - your child will have the foundation he/she needs to grow strong.

In a few short sentences, Ellen White encourages parents to draw close to their children so that they will grow emotionally healthy:

"Some parents do not understand their children and are not really acquainted with them. There is often a great distance between parents and children. If the parents would enter more fully into the feelings of their children and draw out what is in their hearts, it would have a beneficial influence upon them. The father and the mother should work together in full sympathy with each other. They should make themselves companions to their children. 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. They should reflect the sunshine of love upon the household." (White, 1952, p.190)

Reach out to your children spiritually.

Reach out to your children emotionally.

Reach out with your children to those in need

Building your children into mature adults includes the work of maturing spiritually and emotionally. This maturing is partly achieved through instruction, which is what Moses admonished the Israelites to do in Deuteronomy 6:1-7. This growth also takes place as parents interact with their children on a daily basis (the building blocks mentioned before). The third thing we can do to help our children mature as disciples of Jesus Christ is to show them that helping others helps us. Selfishness in the heart of a person destroys them and others. But a selfless, kind, and generous spirit is a blessing to all.

[NOTE: THOSE WHO UTILYZE THIS SERMON MAY CHOSE TO USE THE FOLLOWING STORY IN THE THIRD PERSON OR SHARE YOUR OWN STORY]

When I, Claudio, was a hospice chaplain, one of my responsibilities was to visit all our new patients to assess their spiritual needs. I recall visiting Jim, an AIDS patient who was living with his parents. AIDS was a recently discovered and diagnosed terminal disease and due to the lack of knowledge and unfounded fears many were afraid of be around AIDS patients lest they may get infected accidentally. In reality, as we have learned, one cannot become infected with the AIDS virus through casual contact like shaking hands or talking to a person. We had many enjoyable visits with Jim and his parents as his condition deteriorated with each passing day. Our daughters were quite young at the time – two and seven years old – when I took them with me to visit Jim and his family, something we all enjoyed. I remember when I brought them into Jim’s parents’ home the family brightened up. It was rare for them to have visitors, much less children, and our daughters’ presence brought them much joy during this very sad time.

I didn’t realize even then the impact those visits had on our daughters until recently when our older daughter, now an adult, mentioned them in one of our conversations. She was telling us she remembered Jim, and his parents, and their house. But what’s most important, those visits opened their minds and hearts to the realities of the needs of those who are terminally ill and of those who through sin, their choices, or personal circumstances may be different than we are but are still in need of a loving touch.

This is what Jesus referred to when He said:

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ 37“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (Mat.25:34-40, NKJV).

The care of the needy is not limited to the sick. Several churches, including the one where I, Claudio, was the pastor at the time, worked together to provide food and clothing for the homeless in the large metropolitan area where we lived. There were many cold Saturday nights when together with church members our family went downtown with hot soup and sandwiches to feed those who had nowhere to sleep or live. How much and how many we helped we may never know, but I know of at least four people who were blessed every time we were there. Our children's characters are built when they take their eyes off themselves and look at the needs of others.

Again, Ellen White writes:

“With hearts filled with sympathy and compassion, they [church members] are to minister to those in need of help, bringing to sinners a knowledge of the Saviour's love. Such work calls for laborious effort, but it brings a rich reward. Those who engage in it with sincerity of purpose will see souls won to the Saviour, for the influence that attends the practical carrying out of the divine commission is irresistible.” (White, 1911, p. 109)

We want to have that joyous experience of bringing others to the Savior. It is a truly exhilarating experience. Why keep it to ourselves when we can share it with our children?

Reach out to your children spiritually.

Reach out to your children emotionally.

Reach out with your children to those in need.

Reach out with your children to the World

One of the most effective methods to help young people maintain their faith-commitment and to grow in spiritual maturity is by providing them with service-learning opportunities. As Diana Garland explains,

“Service-learning combines methods of experiential education with the needs of the neighborhood or larger community. It involves families in learning about needs, studying what the Bible has to say about those needs and the church's response, gaining knowledge and skills needed for service, engaging in service, and reflecting on these experiences.” (Garland, 1999, p. 388)

“In short, service-learning occurs ‘when service and learning are intertwined in ways that express Christian love and commitment. . .’” (Roehlkepartain, 1993, p. 11 from Garland, 1999, p. 389).

This does not mean that we simply ship our children to a different country, to go help people in another part of the world. While that can be a very positive and worthwhile

endeavor, it is more powerful when parents join their kids in service-oriented projects both in our own community and country and in other countries as well. When parents talk about faith and involve their children in service activities it doubles and sometimes triples their children's chances of living out their faith as adults. (DeVries, 2004, p. 63).

Many Adventist academies organize mission trips for their students. These are short-term mission opportunities which usually take place over the course of one to two weeks during their spring, Christmas vacation, or sometimes after the end of the school year. During those mission trips students help to build schools and churches, conduct vacation Bible school programs, and even preach at church or conduct evangelistic outreach programs in the communities they visit. The experience of leaving their home land to help people in other, more needy places has been a life-changing experience for many students and on many occasions they witness the result of their efforts by worshipping in a church building they have helped build, or visiting the classroom they helped construct and see the faces of young students smiling back at them with joy and appreciation. Many students have helped lead people to Christ, have walked with them to the waters of baptism, and have been the first ones to welcome them to the church family with a warm hug. Many students have also given their lives to Christ during mission trips, or have recommitted their lives to God and to His service. On occasion, parents of students have had the opportunity to go on those mission trips with their children to help chaperone the students, to work side by side with the young people, to offer their skills, experience, and knowledge, and to give their support through word and work, through prayer and action. Local churches, we can help sponsor mission trips that students in their congregation can participate in, and make it possible for at least one of their parents to go along. The shared experience can change their lives and impact the congregation in a positive way upon their return.

Adventist colleges also offer opportunities for their students to dedicate one year of their lives to go as student missionaries someplace in the world. These students take a year off from their studies to serve people they have never met; to live among people of a different language and culture. The college has recognized that a year away from the classroom is not wasted time but rather it is time to grow and learn in a different setting. Of course, parents can't always take an entire year to go with their children, but they can support them through their prayers, through care packages, and may be able to take a few days to visit them and to encourage them.

But one does not have to leave one's own country to go into the mission field. There are people in great need within a short distance from where we live. In places affected by weather-related disasters like tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, or typhoons; families can help by gathering items from their own home, or working together with other families or with the church family. These items can be taken or shipped to communities in need. Almost every day in the news we hear of a house fire and of the people who have lost it all. Young children can learn to share of the abundance of their toys and clothing with those who don't have that much or who have lost all they had.

Another way for families to help those in need is to dedicate time or funds for agencies like the Adventist Community Services or the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. These agencies collect items and funds, and distribute them to people in need both locally and abroad. Simply writing a check is a generous thing to do; but when parents and children participate together in the collection of goods or funds, it becomes a wonderful learning opportunity for all.

In the days when missionaries went to other countries and had practically no contact with home, letters or care packages from their loved ones were always welcomed gifts. Today, technology allows for more regular contact, children and parents can also adopt a missionary with whom they can correspond via e-mail, talk to via Skype, or send care packages in the mail to that person. These are some of the ways to help our children reach out to the world and another way for parents to help mold the lives and characters of their children to be more like Christ.

Reach out to your children spiritually.

Reach out to your children emotionally.

Reach out with your children to those in need.

Reach out with your children to the world.

Conclusion

Before the age of photography, the only way to preserve the likeness of a person was to commission an artist to create a painting of them. Today we can view many portraits of famous people in museums around the world. A much less expensive way to preserve the likeness of a person became available when photography was invented. This made it possible for more than just the wealthy to have a picture of themselves or their loved ones. Today, with digital photography, almost everyone can make lasting memories of people and places in their lives.

One day everything in this world will be consumed by fire; the expensive paintings of famous people, the photographs of common people, and the digital images of everything and everyone. The only thing that will have eternal lasting value will be the character our children develop while alive. And it is our responsibility and opportunity, as parents, to help our children in the development of their characters. "In dealing with your children, follow the method of the gardener. By gentle touches, by loving ministrations, seek to fashion their characters after the pattern of the character of Christ." (White, 1954, p.36).

What a great privilege we have, as parents, to be used by God to continue shaping the masterpiece He began when our children were inside their mother's womb. May we take that artistic task to heart knowing that we're not simply creating a work of art that will one day pass away, but a true masterpiece for eternity.

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Winsome Love

By Karen and Ron Flowers

Introduction

Nothing warms like a wood fire.” That at least, was the axiom with which Ron grew up in eastern Canada, with its cold winters and deep snow. Ron’s dad believed in heating with wood, so he installed a large wood furnace in the basement, with a huge central metal register in the passage between the living room and the kitchen. Everyone, visitors included, vied for a spot on it to avoid the morning chill.

No doubt the lasting impressions of that wood heat partially influenced our desire to put a wood stove in the home we built for our retirement in a rural, wooded area of Virginia. Wood stoves are permitted as a secondary source of heat in modern homes here, but we have to say, on cold days from fall to spring, it is our heat of choice. Guests to our home inevitably gravitate to chairs nearest the stove, or simply sit down cross-legged in front of it. The sight of the dancing flames through the glass doors soothes the eyes even as the heat radiating outward from the cast iron firebox warms the body. The delight we take in each day’s fire is such that we have occasionally commented to each other in mid-summer, “Do you think we could use the air conditioning to cool the house enough so we could start a fire in the stove?”

A Sacred Fire

Scripture’s choice of a metaphor for married love is a blazing fire. We find this in Song of Songs 8:6 as the bride cries out:

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm;

for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave.

It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame (Song of Solomon 8:6, NIV).

The passage is a sublime crescendo in the Song's poetic lines about married love. The "blazing fire" symbol for love fits. It captures the romantic passion couples feel toward each other, and it depicts the power and invincibility of committed marital love to vanquish all that would threaten the relationship. In addition, it conveys the feelings of comfort, warmth and safety from the cold that are so necessary for marriage to flourish.

Heating system for the home. Some ten years into our marriage, we attended a marriage enrichment weekend. Karen deserves the credit for signing us up. Ron resisted, but went along as a "dragee." Surprised and pleased with the positive results, we began a quest to experience more. We learned of David and Vera Mace, founders of an organization now known as *Better Marriages*. We were more than eager to travel the distance to listen and learn from them.

What we met were two humble individuals in their seventies. We were captivated as they talked together ("dialogued") about growth in their marriage. They sat close to each other, with David nearly shouting to communicate with his partially-deaf beloved, Vera. Clearly, they were bent on processing issues and becoming fully one, even after 50 years of marriage.

The Maces had a metaphor for marriage that has lingered with us over the years. They compared marriage to a home heating system. In their classic devotional book, *In the Presence of God* (1985), they wrote: "Mutual affection between husband and wife will be to the family what the heating system is to a house. It will maintain the relationship of all family members in a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere" (p. 109).

A mission of warmth. In their monumental work on Christian marriage through the ages, *The Sacred Fire* (1986), the Maces garnered sayings from many Christian writers. More than a century ago, H. Hensley Henson, Anglican Canon of Westminster, also connected with the imagery of married love as a winsome fire and saw in it a metaphor for the advancement of evangelistic mission from home to home. In his concluding lines to his book, *Christian Marriage* (1907), Henson penned:

From the hallowed enclosure of the Church the sacred fire of domestic love, kindled from the altar of divine love, shall be carried far and wide into the world of human life, and shall create everywhere the light and warmth of home (pp. 145, 146).

In this poetic prose, the author puts his finger on important truths about marriage. He challenges Christians to not keep this love that comes from God to themselves, but to share it widely with the world. There is a mission here for couples. It is akin to the directive of Jesus in Matthew 5:16. A Henson paraphrase might go like this:

Let the fire of your love so burn before others, that they may feel the warmth of your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Fueled by Divine Love

Canon Henson was right; the fire of Christian marital love is “kindled from the altar of divine love.” A marginal reading of our key text in Song of Songs 8:6, in fact, offers this intriguing variant for the last line: “like the very flame of the Lord” (NIV). Richard Davidson, Professor of Old Testament at Andrews University, makes a convincing case in *Flame of Yahweh* (2007) that this is the true sense of the text. Since the last word in the phrase is “Yah,” a shortened form of Yahweh (“Jehovah”), this verse about love should properly read: “Love...burns like blazing fire, like the very flame of the Jehovah.”

Trinity love. The love God wants for us to have—in our marriages and in all aspects of our lives—is “a spark off of the Holy Flame” (Davidson, 2007, p. 630). The clearest discussion of “love” and “God” in Scripture is found in the New Testament letter of 1 John: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:7, 8). The assertion, “God is love,” is again repeated in 1 John 4:16.

Theologians often speak of God as *omnipotent*—“all powerful,” omniscient—“all knowing,” *omnipresent*—“present everywhere.” Here is declaration that God is also—“all loving,” that God’s very nature is *love*. The Greek word used here in the original language is *agape*. Because *agape* is associated with God, it must be defined, not merely translated. Without such understanding, our human tendency will always be to try to comprehend God in terms of human love. So what adjectives characterize *agape* love?

Self-sacrificing. While human love is marked by self-interest, the love of *agape*, or *agape* love, is marked by self-sacrifice. As Paul puts it, *agape* love “is not self-seeking” (1 Cor. 13:5). The foremost illustration of God’s self-sacrificing love is His gift of His one and only Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16; 4:10).

Unconditional. Growing out of the root of selfishness in human nature, human love is conditional. It offers love in exchange for something it wants. There is always an “I will love you ‘if’...” attached to human love. By contrast, *agape* love flows freely from the heart of God irrespective of human goodness and worth. “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7, 8).

Unchangeable. Human love is changeable, fluctuating and unreliable. *Agape* love is, by contrast, unfailing, constant, everlasting, and reliable (John 13:1; Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 12:8).

As incomprehensible as the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—God in three Persons—is, John’s declaration that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) provides an all-important clue to this holy mystery. The members of the Godhead are the essence of a perfect love that binds them together as One in everything they think, say, and do. When God said, “Let us make humankind in our image” (Gen. 1:26), man and woman were bestowed with a nature controlled by *agape* love, by *Trinity* love, we might say. This, in turn, provides an

all-important clue to that other holy mystery of the oneness of husband and wife. We are to be united (“one flesh”- Gen. 2:23) as the Godhead is united (“The Lord is one”- Deut. 6:4) by a perfect love born of God.

Love one another: Jesus’ new commandment. Jesus called His followers to relate to each other with *agape* love (John 13:34, 35). The unity in relationships this *agape* love—this Trinity love—engenders is a hallmark of authentic discipleship (John 13:34). On the evidence provided by the love that binds us together, God has staked His reputation in the world. In His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus pleads with His Father for unity and love among His followers that His mission to earth may be validated (John 17:23).

For none of Jesus’ followers is this *agape* love more crucial than for married couples. Jesus has reaffirmed the creation plan for oneness in marriage (Matt. 19:5, 6), yet sinful human nature since the Fall inevitably defaults to selfishness and divisiveness (Is.53:6; Ps. 14:1, 3; 53:1, 3; Rom. 3:12). Like nuclear reactors operating on spent fuel rods, we do not have power within ourselves to provide a witness of oneness, to share light and warmth in our family circles, let alone offer light and warmth for the world. How we need the flames of *agape* love from the inner reaches of God’s Trinitarian life to fall upon us and unite us as one in married love!

How the fire falls. Jesus is literally “God with us” (Matt. 1:23; cf. John 1:14) and is therefore the tangible embodiment of *agape* love. He has promised to be with us always (Matt. 28:20). He has promised His Holy Spirit to dwell within believers and to bring His presence to us (John 15:26; 16:7, 13-15; 17:23; cf. Rom. 8:10; Eph. 3:17). Where the Spirit of Christ dwells, the precious fruit of love is borne (Gal. 5:22).

Our good friends and former family ministry colleagues, Gaspar and May-Ellen Colon, stand tall in our minds as an exhibit of the power of *agape* love. Gaspar has suffered for much of his adult life with polycystic kidney disease. For more than two decades, his condition deteriorated until finally, in late 2002, his situation became so critical he was placed on a search list for a transplant. The list was long—more than 3000 people needed the same kidney he required. The couple was told that the wait could be as long as 5 years. Without a transplant, a protracted period of kidney dialysis, with all its complications, loomed as inevitable.

In her prayer diary, May-Ellen poured out her heart to God for her companion:

Lord, Gaspar needs a new kidney NOW. Work out this problem according to your will. You have said in Philippians 4:19 that you will supply all our needs. Thank you for taking care of this urgent need in your own time and in your own way. (Colon, 2012)

Then, an idea began to form in her mind. Perhaps she could be the donor! Against the odds that she would have a kidney compatible with his needs, she decided to submit herself to the arduous testing that was required. Amazingly, the tests revealed that she

was not only compatible, she was an excellent match. Overjoyed as they were with this answer to prayer, there was a problem. May-Ellen had done her own battle with breast cancer and, though she was a survivor, caution was necessary. She had to be deemed healthy enough to make such a critical donation. Gaspar reflects on their decision-making at that critical time:

While I was desperately in need of this gift from her, I was reluctant to have May-Ellen go through the pain and sacrifice. But she insisted that this was something that she wanted to do out of her love for me. I had to squelch my pride and be as willing to receive this gift as much as she was willing to give it. (Colon, 2012)

The surgery on both patients—donor and recipient—took place successfully on August 7, 2003. When it was over, Gaspar and May-Ellen awoke in the same recovery room. Gaspar recalls,

When I began to stir, they rolled May-Ellen’s bed close to mine and we had a chance to gaze at each other through blurry eyes. I felt a closeness to her that I had never experienced before. The concept of “one flesh” suddenly had a new and deeper meaning. My gratitude to her for saving my life was overwhelming. I remember May-Ellen lifting her head and asking me the question: “Are you being a good landlord for my kidney?” (Colon, 2012)

They have shared their extraordinary testimony in sermons, books and journals. Relatives, friends, attendees at their marriage and family seminars, even their colleagues like ourselves, have been deeply moved at this display of unconditional and self-sacrificing love. It is the “blazing fire” love, “the very flame of Jehovah” of which the Song of Solomon speaks. We exclaim in the words of the old hymn, “What wondrous love is this?” As Davidson says, “By beholding the love relationship within the Song and within contemporary godly marriages, one may catch a glimpse of the divine holy love. These marriages preach to us of the awesome love of God” (2007, p. 631).

Creating Everywhere the Warmth of Home

The spread of love as it radiates outward from a married couple was eloquently described by Mary Macaulay in *The Art of Marriage* (1958):

A married couple who love their home, their family, and their friends, create a charmed circle and make a warmth which radiates all it touches. To this sort of home, be it rich or poor in material things, the children return at every opportunity; and from it they go out into the world to start other homes of the same type, homes which are built on the lasting love that husband and wife feel for each other. (p. 106)

When we read the lines, “To this sort of home, be it rich or poor in material things, the children return at every opportunity...,” we remembered an experience we had with a

family living for a year or so in the house next to us in our suburban Washington, DC neighborhood. They were a couple with one little boy, perhaps five or six years old—Darron, we'll call him. The father, who ran a small jewelry shop on the corner, made it clear he was not interested in forming friendships in the neighborhood. His daily walk to and from work with two aggressive, growling Dobermans on long leashes insured that everyone was kept at the distance he wanted. We saw little of the mother, who typically remained inside. However, during the summer of the year they lived next to us, Darron would often stand at the chain-link fence between our properties. Forbidden to leave his yard, he would wistfully watch our two teenage sons, home from academy, shooting basketball hoops in the driveway.

One Friday afternoon, while Ron was running errands and Karen was working around the house, she was startled to find Darron in our living room sitting quietly on the couch. The front door had been open and the storm door unlocked; so he had let himself in without a sound.

Karen exclaimed, "Why, Darron, I didn't know you were here!"

"Oh, please, Mrs. Flowers, let me stay," he pleaded with his words and his eyes. "I just want to sit in here awhile. It's pretty in here and nobody's fighting." Karen drew him close, assuring him he could stay as long as he liked. Meanwhile, she kept an eye toward their house lest his mother come looking for him. After a few minutes, realizing perhaps that he would be in a lot of trouble if he were caught out of his yard, he left—as inconspicuously as he had come in.

We don't know if Darron's parents ever knew that he came to our house that day or if they ever sensed the longing in his heart for love and peace. While we pondered what more we might do, the family simply left town one day. No one ever knew where they went.

Meanwhile, we keep hoping that because Darron witnessed in our house a man and a woman who love each other, two boys who laughed and played and knew they could take their parents' love for granted, he saw enough. Perhaps, because he has seen it at least once, it can be real for him in the home he will one day establish. Even if it wasn't happening at his house, being near it should count for something. (Adapted from Flowers, 1992)

Love-flame sharing. How *do* we carry the sacred flame of love "far and wide into the world of human life, and . . . create everywhere the light and warmth of home?" Through what means can our marriages forward God's mission in the world? Perhaps it will be an openness to children like Darron who need a hug and an opportunity to hang around your house. Perhaps some will take a child in to their home and heart through adoption or foster care. Perhaps there's a child at church who would blossom if you remembered their name and affirmed their gifts, or pulled them up between you on the pew for the worship service. Maybe, like us, you'll build a swing set in your backyard, just in case . . . The possibilities for ministry to children, that the next generation may experience God's love and take it to places we will never go, are endless.

Likewise there are many possibilities for love ministry to couples and families. Certainly the direct testimony of love in action in our marriages, such as that given us by the Maces and the Colons, carries the flame everywhere. Befriending other couples, offering hospitality around a simple meal, getting involved in marriage mentoring, are but a few of the myriad of ways couples can find to lift and encourage others if they will prayerfully watch for opportunities to show genuine unconditional, self-giving, unflinching love to others and move into action as God leads them.

Ellen White has spoken about what we might call *influence* evangelism.

Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the *influence* of a true home upon human hearts and lives. . . . Our sphere of *influence* may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquisitions limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes.” (White, 1942, pp. 352, 355 emphasis supplied)

The Maces contend that “the Christian home is, in fact, by far the most powerful evangelizing agency in the world” (Mace, 1985, p. 113). We think they are right. Further,

By their gracious influence, Christian homes win more converts than all the preachers put together. Give us enough of them, and the world would soon be a Christian world; for the world’s life rises to the higher levels only as its homes do so. (Mace, 1985, p. 113)

Conclusion

On a cold winter morning, we have often wished we could throw some kind of switch and create an instant bed of hot coals and roaring fire which would have the wood stove in our home operating at maximum output instantly. But that, of course, is not the way this kind of heating system operates. Rather, a wood stove induces change in the environment slowly, as embers glow and the heat generated by the logs gradually heats the surrounding air. Imperceptibly at first, but steadily, the temperature of even the coldest room will rise. So too, is the influence of winsome love in Christian marriage. And, as the number of couples who choose to be great lovers for God are multiplied, the cumulative effect will warm all who draw near. Who will join us in sharing the sacred fire of God’s love through our marriage?

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Beginning At Home

By Jongimpi Papu

Text: Mark 5:22-24, 35-43.

Introduction

Our theme and emphasis for this year is, *families reaching out*. Outreach is the life blood of the Adventist church but is it the lifeblood of Adventist families? The statement by Ellen White puts this in proper perspective, when she says, “Missionaries for the Master are best prepared for work abroad in the Christian household. . .” (White, 1952, p. 317). This makes the family a missionary school where the actual and effective preparation of missionaries takes place.

In Matthew 28:19 we find the marching orders for the church, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations. . .” I am sure the early church may have thought of pagan regions in far flung places they need to travel to as they in obedience to the commission. In Acts 1:8, Jesus instructs His disciples to begin in “Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria and to the end of the world”. Doing mission to the ends of the world is only possible and effective if we start in Jerusalem. We can never accomplish the mission of making disciples of the nations if our children are not discipled for Christ.

Einstein is known for the complex theory of relativity, which has contributed greatly to science; but Jairus is known for his role in being instrumental in bringing back his daughter to life. The parents of this daughter were not only responsible for bringing their child to life, but the record shows they also brought life to their child. The message to the dying world will have more power if families are alive to reach out to the world.

The title for our message is, *Beginning at Home*.

The Story

The story is recorded in all three gospels and all three bring out details that are unique to each gospel. In Mark and Luke, the father of the daughter is identified as Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. Matthew does not give the name of the father, but he also refers to him as the ruler of the synagogue. All three, in other words, are in agreement when it comes to the position or authority of this man.

We also see that Luke refers to the daughter as the *only* daughter and indicates that she was twelve years old (vs. 42). Mark refers to her as the little daughter and later adds that she was twelve years old (vs. 42) as if to give reason why she was able to walk after being raised to life. To Matthew the daughter is just referred to as *my daughter* and no age is mentioned.

It is clear as one reads the story from the three gospels that this child was Jairus' little daughter of twelve years of age. It is not clear what is meant by *only daughter*, was she the only daughter among boys or the only child? If she was the only daughter and not the only child then she probably was the last-born since she is referred to as little daughter. If there were other children in the family, probably Christ would have asked them to remain behind and be witnesses to the raising of the dead child. Since this is absent we can conclude she was the only child.

According to Matthew the child was already dead when the father approached Jesus. The other two gospels record that she was at the point of death. Was she dead or at the point of death? Maybe we will go with the majority since Ellen White also accepts their view (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 343). The SDA Commentary gives the view that the girl was *all but dead*. The situation of this girl was so critical that even when the father was told she was dead, he was not surprised. If she was at the point of death when he left her, anything could have happened.

Jairus as a Ruler of the Synagogue

All three gospels agree that Jairus was the ruler or one of the rulers of the synagogue. This man occupied a very important position in the Jewish religious system. We get a glimpse of this in Luke 13 where we find a ruler of the synagogue rebuking Christ for healing on Sabbath. The rulers of the synagogue were in actual fact part of the group that had a problem with Christ, accusing him for undermining the law of Moses.

As a ruler of the synagogue, it would have been easier for him to send one of the deacons to Jesus to come and heal his child. As a man and a husband, Jairus had taken it upon himself the responsibility of bringing his child into this world. As a matter of principle, he was not about to delegate the task of bringing life to his only daughter to another person. He showed boldness in approaching Christ in the public view and begging Him to heal his daughter.

As part of his responsibility as a ruler of the synagogue, Jairus may have been expected to reach out to the Jewish families in one way or another. But for him the best way of achieving this was to begin at home. Reaching out to his dying child became the best

and most effective method in reaching out to the dying world. He would not allow the prejudice of his colleagues to derail him from the mission of saving his daughter.

Jairus epitomizes the following statement very well, “The world is not so much in need of great minds, as of good men, who are a blessing in their homes” (White, 1948, p. 204). Jairus may have been known for his sterling work in the synagogue, but it was his ministry at home that set him apart. It is easy to reach out to dying souls in the world while our own children are languishing at home.

The healing of Jairus’ daughter would undoubtedly become the basis for an extended ministry, which would include the synagogue. It would be easier for him to invite Jesus to his synagogue now that He had been to his house and had healed his daughter. Our witness for Jesus to others is strengthened by what He has done in our own lives and our own families.

Jairus had shown faith in Jesus. His position did not prevent him from begging for mercy. He went to Christ believing that his daughter would be healed, “Come and lay your hands on her that she may be healed and she will live” Mark 5:23.

If Jairus, as a ruler of the synagogue, had harbored any resentment against Christ, his child would probably have died. It is often the attitude of the parents toward Christ that can prove to be a blessing or a curse to their children. This can be seen in the attitude we have against those who have been tasked by the church to take care of our children. Sometimes the very people who are assisting in the discipleship of our children are the subject of gossip during Sabbath lunch. This is even worse when it happens in the presence of the very children who look up to these leaders. Jairus left a legacy for his daughter, one that reminded his daughter God could be trusted.

Jairus as a Father

It is very clear that Jairus loved his little daughter. He loved her more than his position in the synagogue. He was willing to risk his reputation for his dying child. The unusual thing about this story is that it features a relationship between a father and a daughter, something very unique in the gospels. Women have always been in the forefront when it comes to the salvation of their children. It was a group of women who brought the children to Christ to be blessed. The fathers were busy arguing with Christ on the theology of divorce.

One could possibly understand if the child were a son, for that was the pride of every Jewish father. Here we see a father going all out to ensure that his daughter is healed. It is likely that giving birth to a daughter in that culture was not viewed as an important event. There are cultures in some parts of the world where the birth of a girl child is regarded as a non-event. One is not regarded as having children if he has daughters only.

It is an open secret that women were not highly esteemed in the Jewish culture.

Notwithstanding the negative view the cultures may have had against women, this man, by the name of Jairus would not be deterred in seeking help for his daughter.

He lovingly called his daughter, *my little* daughter. The age of twelve was regarded as legal age for marriage in the Jewish culture of the day. This is probably the reason why Mark and Luke deliberately indicate that she was twelve years of age. The point is that this girl was not a child or an infant. So the word little is not referring to age or level of maturity but is a word of endearment. She was beloved by her father. No wonder he left everything and sought the help of Jesus.

We are living in a time when girls are abused by their parents and in particular their fathers. This is, of course, encouraged by the negative view most cultures and societies have against women. In spite of the culture of the day, God still has men who are willing to risk everything for their daughters and their children. There is a Jairus in every community.

Our prayer is that we may have more of them and that you too can be one of them. These are fathers who regard the welfare of their children more importantly than their careers. They may be pastors, elders, or officers in the church, but their priority lies with their children. They know that they cannot win the world if they cannot reach out to their *little daughters*. Ministry at home prepares us for ministry in the synagogue.

Jairus as a Husband

When Jesus came to the house of Jairus, he asked all to leave except the three disciples and the parents. According to Matthew those people were making noise. The other gospel writers also report that they laughed when Jesus said the child was not dead. Ellen White says when Jesus came he found the hired mourners and flute players making noise as a way of mourning the death of the girl (White, 1898, p. 343). They had given up on the child and had become a nuisance and a stumbling block to what Christ was about to do.

In Luke 8:51, we are told that only James, Peter, John and the parents were allowed to be with Jesus. Jesus recognizes the role of Jairus and his wife by inviting them to be with Him as He ministers to their dead child. This was also recognition of the intimate relationship between Jairus and his wife. If Jairus and his wife were not in harmony, probably they would have never presented their child to Jesus. Instead of calling on Jesus for help they would have remained quarreling and blaming each other for the sickness and death of their child. It is “the atmosphere that surrounds the souls of the parents” that makes a home a missionary center (White, 1952, pp. 15, 16).

It is interesting to note that in that room we had Jesus who is the Savior, the one who calls upon all to accept Him. He is the one who was lifted up so that all families may be drawn to Him. We also had disciples, God’s instruments in reaching out to lost humanity. Today ministers, Sabbath school leaders, youth leaders and many others play that role. The parents were invited to remain behind also; it was their responsibility to lead their own child to Christ.

Sabbath school; youth and pathfinder ministries play a very important role, but these should never take away the parents’ responsibility of bringing their children to Jesus (White, 1952, p. 188).

As long as there is cooperation between the church and the family there is hope for our children. But this begins with the parents and it begins at home.

Reaching Out. . .

When the child woke up, she probably saw her parents hand in hand with tears of joy in their eyes and standing beside her bed. She, also, may have noticed the four strangers whose faces beamed with joy. She probably was later told how her parents refused to give up even when she was declared dead. You will never find a birthday present that will surpass this one. This was a gift of life, a second chance.

Christ instructed them to keep quiet and not tell anyone about this event. This was a tall order for this girl. Birthdays are a celebration of a natural process of life that occurs every minute. We may hide our years but we usually do not hide our birthdays. How would this child and this family celebrate the day she was brought back to life? This could never remain a secret besides, the whole village knew about the miracle.

Imagine this girl telling her friends about what had happened. You can almost hear the excitement in her voice as she tells them how her parents refused to give up even when the whole community had given up. Wait until you hear her tell them about Jesus. She was not taken to Jesus, but Jesus came to her— right into her bedroom to give her the gift of life. Yes while other children would be celebrating their birthdays, she would forever be grateful for the day Christ gave her the gift of a second chance.

The parents would find it difficult to keep quiet—this was impossible to keep it locked inside their hearts. That family had a story and they were going to tell the whole world. It was their experience of what Jesus meant to them. For this family reaching out could never be a difficult task. Families can reach out if they have been enriched by the presence and the healing power of Jesus.

Conclusion

What was supposed to be a tragedy for that family became a blessing in many ways. The crisis of losing their child served as an opportunity of inviting Christ to their home. Deuteronomy 6 reminds us that every situation and every experience can be turned into a teaching moment. Reaching out to our family members prepares us for the mission beyond the boundaries of the home. We are reminded of the following words:

Sisters, go to work for your children. Will you show that you have a well ordered family? Then will you go to work for your neighbors? Will you then be a light and power in the church, because you have the light of the power of God? (White, 1994, p. 55)

We may find ourselves in a situation where our own children have not been reached for Christ. They may have opted through their own choice to serve other gods rather than the God of their parents. We may have done our best or may have even failed in our responsibility to reach out to our children. But, we can still reach out to the world and

minister through our pain and tears. God knows the burden we bear and He calls us to come to Him to find rest. (Matthew 11:28-30).

Appeal

We have been commissioned to preach the gospel to the whole world. In order to do an effective work, we must begin at home. The Nobel Peace Prize goes to those who have played a significant role in impacting the lives of others in our society. A faithful mother and father who have accepted Christ as their personal Savior and labor for their children and family members may never qualify for this prize.

But, in the annals of heaven, the greatest are those who are a blessing in their homes. It is one thing to bring them into this life, but another to bring life—yes, eternal life to them as we disciple them for Christ.

Reaching out begins at home, but should never end there. Go ye therefore and be a blessing in your own home! The Holy Spirit is ready to empower us, are we ready to go? Who will go?

With Christ on our side we can reach out to the whole world, but this begins right at home.

May this be our experience today!

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All Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

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Families in the End Times

By Marcos Faiock Bomfim

Objectives

[1] To demonstrate how Noah and his family serve as a spiritual model for families living at the doors of eternity; [2] to encourage families to get involved in the missionary project “Families for Families”.

Introduction

“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ . . . Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air. . .’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Genesis 6:1-8.

An important aspect of this story is related to man’s sinful nature: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”. Genesis 6:5.

Noah lived in his end time, just as we today are living in the eschatological End Times. Soon this world will end. In this solemn moment, what kind of husband or wife should I be? What kind of parents should we be so that our children will also have access to the new earth? Understanding the crucial time in which they were living, Noah and his family were forced

to drastically alter many of their plans and their lifestyle.

They were also the only human beings that lived in two eras in the history of this earth (pre and post-flood) and the only ones who experienced a drastic change between the “old” and “new” earth. Many things changed! The environment and climate were altered after this process, but the most important thing to note is that Noah and his wife did not only adapt to these changes, but they found a way to take all of their children with them on that incredible experience!

Both parents and children were involved in the Mission that God had justly proposed for that time and that is what made the difference between the downfall and the salvation of that family. Since we are living at the end of the end times, what can we do or how should we live so that we may be able to go through the same experience that awaits us—moving from this earth to a New Earth? Let us take a look at the following. . .

Who was Noah?

“. . . Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” Genesis 6:9.

He did not walk with God because he was just. He was just because he walked with God and certainly he made his search for God the first and main activity of the day. It is by walking daily in God’s presence that we are considered “perfect” (Genesis 17:1). His perseverance in seeking God made him similar to the Father—just and righteous.

Noah and his family developed healthy routines that strengthened their habit of seeking God, both as individuals and as a family. Just like Abraham did years later, Noah, after leaving the ark, built an altar and offered sacrifices to the Lord (Genesis 8:20). This is strong evidence that Noah and his family, in their time, practiced Family Worship, something that is still practiced in our time by families that consider themselves children of God.

Probably, just like most families, Noah and his family had made some plans for the future: raise kids, have grandchildren, increase property and acquire things. Everything seemed to be going well, and maybe they were satisfied with the agreeable structure of their work, rest and family life routines. There was a stability that produced a feeling of safety, until one day Noah heard something strange from God!

Received a Revelation

“A hundred and twenty years before the flood, the Lord by a holy angel declared to Noah His purpose, and directed him to build an ark.” (White, 1958, p. 92) What would be the consequences of everything that would occur?

- *The end of an era* – Despite being at the door of the end of an important era, apparently no human being, besides Noah, seemed to care about it.

- *The Revelation anticipated the arrival of a family crisis* – There would be a sudden change in the chain of circumstances that ruled family life until now. There would be a family crisis and God wanted the family to be prepared for that big crisis in advance.
- *There would be destruction as part of God’s judgment*

“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. . . .’” Genesis 6:11-13.

Isn’t it incredible that the reasons presented were corruption, violence and the deterioration of human nature? Do you see any similarities with the situation in our days?

- *His survival depended on the acceptance of the plan* – Noah did not need to waste time studying some solution or plan of action for the crisis approaching his family and the world. God had already planned everything ahead of time. If he (1) accepted the plan and (2) obeyed it, he and his family would be saved. If he rejected the plan not only him, but his family as well, would be lost and would die with the earth.
- *He was invited to be transported to another era* – His family’s experience would be unique: he would live in two worlds, two earths, two eras – one before the flood and another after it. No other family had this privilege.
- *The same reality exists today* (Matthew 24:37) – Jesus says, “. . . as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” It’s striking to see that the same conditions of that time are repeated today, precisely at the gates of the end of this era, when we know that there will be destruction! Just as in Noah’s days, there exists today a revelation from God through his prophets (ancient and modern) and our survival depends on (1) accepting and (2) practicing God’s plan.

Just as it happened with Noah, we also receive a Revelation sent by God specifically for the end times in which we are living and in a manner no less supernatural. God granted dreams and visions to His messenger, Ellen G. White, and through this method He guides us with clarity in regards of how to act in preparation for the coming crisis, and on how to live and educate our children to participate in the move to the New Earth – after Jesus’ return.

What did God say to Noah?

Noah received a Mission

- He was to build an ark – That was his mission! God gave all of the specifications, the measurements, and all the details needed. The message given in Noah’s time was that the world would be destroyed, an ark should be built, and all were welcome to enter. In those days, doing God’s work was to believe in His word about the Judgment, build an ark and preach! What is the message today?
- Being in the Mission was his salvation – Obeying God and being involved in the Mission (building an ark and preaching) represents salvation and protection. While he worked for the salvation of others, he also worked on his own salvation and that of his family!

“Noah’s warnings had been rejected by the world, but his influence and example resulted in blessings to his family. As a reward for his faithfulness and integrity, God saved all the members of his family with him. What encouragement to parental fidelity!” (White, 1958, p. 98).

- Both salvation and the mission were extended to the family – It is interesting to note that God’s plan was not only extended to Noah, it included his whole family: “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark, (1) you, (2) your sons, (3) your wife, and (4) your sons wives.” Genesis 6:18. This is God’s plan, even today. It is clear that if the children and wives are included in God’s project, then they should also participate in the work. In Noah’s case, the whole family came together to accomplish God’s project and in that way they were saved.

No one should be content with receiving individual salvation. The plan of salvation is individual, but it should also have a family and trans-generational component. The chances that salvation reaches an entire family are infinitely greater when parents accept God’s plan in its entirety and involve the entire family.

God’s plan affects not only the internal dynamic of how a family functions, but also their relational transactions with the external world (inputs and outputs). A family becomes much more selective in regards to the influences that can enter the family system, and they become much more conscious in relation to their responsibility of being “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). They associate with the world in order to influence it for eternal life, and not to be influenced by it. This is the main idea on which the project “Families for Families” is based on: God’s families involved in the salvation of other families.

Consequences

For both Noah and his family, the consequences were clear. Some things would occur whether or not they accepted the Mission.

- They would lose everything – There would be serious losses. That is why Noah and his family could not be attached to anything – houses, property, animals, means of transportation, etc. Everything would be lost forever. They would not have the conditions to preserve anything from the comfortable life they had been living up until then. That is why John says, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:17.

There are many families that have difficulty adjusting to new realities after a loss. Even though they know that their world changed, these families continue being attached to a life that no longer exists. Usually this occurs after an unexpected traumatic event: death, divorce or separation, a mandatory change in employment, children leaving the home, changes in economic situation, etc.

Families who are happy are those that even through their suffering and unavoidable losses, seek to accept the new realities with meekness and adapt to them, seeking alternatives. Rigid materials, just like rigid families, break much easier. Malleability (resilience) allows families to move beyond crises much easier. These families understand that nothing on this earth is certain, that life is dynamic, and that they must keep moving forward, refusing to live in the past.

Noah and his family realized that they needed to detach themselves from the things of the world and attach themselves to the new earth, promised to them. That work was an important priority in their lives. When they understood that truth, they used all the resources they had (which they were going to lose anyway) to complete the mission. And using the resources in this manner allowed them to go through the catastrophe and reach the new earth.

Where am I applying my main financial resources? What item in the family expenses represents the highest percent of the budget? Generally, that is what the family considers as being the most important. What space do the things of God’s Kingdom take up in my budgeting? Since we are living in the end times, is there some change in the budget that still needs to be made? It was for this time that Jesus suggested we gather our treasure in heaven, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will also be” Matthew 6:21.

Truly the time in which Noah lived was very similar to ours. Just like him, we will lose everything when “. . . the elements will melt with fervent heat. . .” 2 Peter 3:10.

- There would be a change that would generate a large family crisis – There would be a great change in the family plans and environment, which would forcefully generate a crisis. The family routines would never be the same. They would never again live in that place where they were married and had raised their children. The flood would cause the family to lose its stability.

But if they did not accept the Mission proposed by God, they would lose their own lives! Even by accepting the mission, the time of a stable and tranquil life had also come to an end.

The plans for the future of perhaps building another house, buying new furniture, acquiring more land, improving the garden, increasing the orchard, etc, had changed.

Does your family adapt well in a crisis (unavoidable changes) or does it suffer through them?

Some facts about Family Crises:

- *A family is a system in constant change* – The life of a family is constantly changing in a crisis, and crises are provoked by expected or unexpected changes in the dynamic patterns of a family. Some of those crises can be:
 - o Related to the life cycle of the family – These are the expected crises such as the arrival of a child, adolescence of the children, children leaving home, the couple getting older, death of parents (grandparents), a grandparent moving into the family home, etc.
 - o Related to a family member's problems – unemployment, poor performance in school, a serious chronic illness, etc.
 - o A result of stresses due to all of the members being in contact with the outside world – a move, flood, economic crisis, etc.
- *Happy families are those who manage to adapt to change* – All families are constantly going through some crisis. Happy families are those that succeed to adapt to the changes and are flexible to alter their habits, routines, tasks, lifestyles, economic patterns, mutual expectations, etc., in order to adapt to new realities. (We are not talking here about to be flexible about God's principles).

Not being trapped in the past and to the way things were, appreciating the way things are now, and accepting the fact that the Lord directs everything for our good (Romans 8:28), are elements that ensure a good future. These truths appear clearly in Noah's family.

- *All of us are changing* – In this world everything changes, including us. We get older, our opinions can change, the world changes and it will continue to do so. Noah's family understood and accepted this fact very well.

Just like them, we know with certainty that we will not stay here. Like the heroes of faith who lived “. . . and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13), we know that our departure is coming soon. That should affect how we will live, purchase, sell, study, etc. If I am moving to another place, for example, what type of preparation or education will be more important for my children? Who should they marry? How can I help them make the right choices? Is it worth buying new furniture for my current home knowing that I will not be there for long?

Noah's (and his family's) response to the Revelation

“Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” Gen. 6:22.

- He involved the whole family in the Mission (building and preaching) – His children and their wives did not only participate in the work, but also in God's protection. Moreover, their participation in the work was fundamental for the desired outcome – their own salvation!
- The Mission became the family's main activity – Their whole lives revolved around the Mission, and not getting bread. That is why, for them, worry over sustenance came afterwards (see Psalm 37:4, 5). The world in which they were living was on borrowed time, therefore their priority was preparing for the move. Everything else came in second place.
- They worked as a family – Parents, children, and wives worked together on the Mission. Sharing the tasks and the company, not only made the job less arduous, it developed intimacy and fellowship among the members, strengthening their ties.
- They were self-sustaining missionaries – They did not wait for others to help them. There was no one else. They worked as if everything depended solely on them. God's eternal plan depended on that family. What changes could this idea produce in my family today?
- They invested everything they had in the ark! – Usually a couple struggles to build a solid economic base for retirement. In Noah's case, by what the Lord had said, everything that had been constructed or acquired with the passing of years would be destroyed. Accepting God's plan represented living with an apparent uncertainty. They knew that preserving things that were destined for destruction would not be a wise decision. Therefore, they needed to use it in the wisest way possible. What did they do?

“While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. *All that he possessed, he invested in the ark.*” (White, 1958, p. 95) [Emphasis ours.]

In doing that, he was able to dispose of everything he owned on the earth! However, after they disembarked the ark, everything their eyes could see belonged to the family that had lost everything. With this, God wanted to teach us that when we give everything we have to the Mission, we are just transferring values and investing in possessions in the new earth.

The truth is that we are incapable of retaining things. Because of the existence of sin and the Great Controversy, the fact is that we lose all things, either by death or by the

destruction due to Jesus' return. The only way of preserving these possessions is by transferring them to the "world above".

Therefore, "this work of transferring your possessions to the world above is worthy of all your best energies. It is of the highest importance, and involves your eternal interests. That which you bestow in the cause of God is not lost. All that is given for the salvation of souls and the glory of God is invested in the most successful enterprise in this life and in the life to come. Your talents of gold and silver, if given to the exchangers, are gaining continually in value, which will be registered to your account in the kingdom of heaven. You are to be the recipients of the eternal wealth that has increased in the hands of the exchangers. In giving to the work of God, you are laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven. All that you lay up above is secure from disaster and loss, and is increasing to an eternal, an enduring substance" (White, 1968, p. 342 – original source: *Review and Herald*, January 24, 1888).

Take a look at this text: Acting this way, ". . . you are securing for yourselves eternal riches, a treasure in heaven that faileth not. Your means is far safer there than if deposited in the bank, or invested in houses and lands. It is laid up in bags that wax not old. No thief can approach it, no fire consume it. . . ." (White, 1968, p. 41 – original source: *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, pp. 291-293).

- He proved the best way to maintain children close to God - Simply, there is no better way of maintaining ones children close to God than being involved ourselves and in involving them on the Mission. It is not enough to manage to keep them in the church. But even so, many families are being trapped today by this too low goal. Similar to Noah's children, to be close to God, they need to be involved with their parents in the Mission.
- Outcome

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark" Genesis 7:11-13.

Salvation of the home: Example for today

The way that God worked in the salvation of Noah's family is an example of what he wants to do in the lives of the families that live in the end times!

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark *for the saving of his household*, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" Hebrews. 11:7. [Emphasis ours.]

Of course we do not have an ark to build. If Noah's life and his obedience serve as examples for us who live at the very gate of eternity, how should we act in order to save our house now in these last and closing days of time?

- We need to involve our children in the Mission – How? Here are some suggestions:
 - *Distributing literature* – Our children can be encouraged to distribute literature, such as the book “The Great Controversy”. Each family can separate resources from their monthly budget in order to acquire these books and distribute them. That is a great activity that can be done during family outings, holidays, vacations, Sunday or Sabbath afternoons. What if we go to one or two blocks in the area in which we live and distribute literature as a family in a systematic way? Seeing their parents involved in the Mission and always participating with them in God's work influences children in a way that only eternity will be able to reveal.
 - *Small Groups* – By opening our homes to a Small Group and inviting other families (this is part of the project “Families for Families” [Families for Families]), we are bringing into our home families or people who the Lord desires to save. The angels will be our companions in this work, and the whole house will be influenced by the climate of Heaven.
 - *Bible Studies* – Each family could set a goal of giving at least one Bible Study per week, where the couple, parents and children come together in the work, reaching another family. That family could be invited to attend a church.
 - *Colporteur*ing – At least once in their lives, our children should be encouraged to dedicate their vacations to the Lord, working for Him through colporteuring. According to God's Revelation for the end times, the work of selling evangelical literature is a noble ministry that will positively impact every young person involved, and will also be a school for life. In Heaven it is considered just as important as the pastoral ministry.

Besides dedicating their lives to God, the children also develop important abilities that will help make their lives on this earth easier, such as speaking with others and influencing them, expressing ideas, and self-sustaining. In some countries the project “Think Big” exists and it organizes young men and women in teams that go out during their vacations in order to colport in different cities. This way, besides preaching the gospel, they find necessary resources that will help them in the future.

- *Volunteer ministry* – When participating in the volunteer ministry of their parents, some children decide to dedicate their lives to a pastoral, educational or medical ministry with the goal of taking the gospel to other people or even to other lands. Parents who are thinking of the New Earth should encourage any inclination their children have in that direction.
- *Project “Families for Families* – Actively involve your family in the project “Families for Families”, which is an intercession and evangelization project for other families, and another option that will positively influence not only your children but also your conjugal relationship.

- o *Adventist Volunteer Service* - is a lifestyle for university students and adults who appreciate radical adventures and at the same time want to work for God. By filling out a registration form on the project site, you can choose a position where it is possible to serve as a volunteer anywhere around the world. In the Adventist Volunteer Service website there are many positions and locations available, as well as a variety of jobs according to abilities, time, and capacities of the person. To learn more about the opportunities offered go to the Website for Adventist Volunteer Service:
<http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/>.

There is no better way to draw ones' children closer to God!

Conclusion

Today more than ever God is calling parents, as He did with Noah, to [1] accept the call to live a holy life, [2] accept the Mission, and [3] involve the entire family. There are some parents that resolve to dedicate their children to God since birth. Could there be a better choice? Involving our children in the Mission is the best way of keeping them close to God and that is far more than simply keep them in the church. Is there a father or mother here today that is receiving God's call to get involved in the Mission with their family and reach other people? Is there a young person here today that is being called to serve the Lord and to dedicate themselves to the Mission? Tell this to the Lord now as we pray.

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Responsive Reading: Reaching Out as a Church Family

Reader: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” Matthew 24:14.

Congregation: “. . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.

Reader: “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great . . .” Acts. 26:22.

Congregation: “. . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.

Reader: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” Hebrews 13: 3.

Congregation: “. . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.

Reader: “. . . for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me” Matthew 25:35-36.

Congregation: “. . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.

Reader: “Then the righteous will answer Him saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick or in prison, and come to You?’” Matthew 25: 37-39.

Congregation: **“ . . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.**

Reader: *“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’” Matthew 25:40.*

Congregation: **“ . . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.**

Reader: *“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another . . . Be hospitable to one another . . .” 1 Peter 4:7-9.*

Congregation: **“ . . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”
Genesis 12: 3.**



Keeping Your Love Alive

By Bryan Craig

In this marriage enrichment resource, marriage and family therapist Dr. Bryan Craig offers an in-depth look at emotional closeness in marriage. Working from his clinical experience and research, he brings solid theory and practical insights to this cutting-edge discussion of the emotional component in marriage. Pastors, family ministries leaders, and others who work with married couples should find this resource informative and helpful, both for marriage seminars and work with couples in premarital guidance and pastoral counselling.

Beyond the sound research base, this resource provides helpful tools enabling couples to evaluate their relationship, and to grow in their communication and conflict resolution skills. Presenters should carefully digest the Leadership Resource segments in each of the three sessions before their own presentation notes, additional seminar handouts or visual aids are developed. A basic PowerPoint with the outline of the presentation is provided with this planbook.

Sessions

1 - How Satisfying is your Marriage?

Handout: *Marital Satisfaction*

2 - Communication: The Key to Emotional Closeness

Handout: *Couple Communication*

3 - Understanding and Dealing with Marital Conflict

Handout: *Conflict Analysis*

Handout: *3 Step Model for Managing Conflict*

Session 1
How Satisfying is your Marriage?
Leadership Resources

Within every human heart there is a yearning for intimacy, a deep desire for connection. From the moment that we are born, we crave the acceptance of others and long to be in relationship with them. Intimacy is essential to survival. So we always need to know that there is someone who is there for us. We all desperately want to feel loved, to belong, to be part of community.

Made for community. We cannot be ourselves by ourselves. We were made for community. Each one has an innate capacity for giving and receiving love and for responding to people around us. We define who we are in the face of those people who constitute our community. The way we come to think and feel about ourselves is fashioned and shaped by the way we perceive others treat us. As Carolyn Saarni so aptly says, “we are the products of our relationships, which are always transactional . . . we derive meaningfulness . . . from the people who have loved us, spent time with us, taught us, or spurned and perhaps even exploited us” (Saarni, 1999, p. 9).

In our search to find meaningful relationships and to experience a sense of love and intimacy in our lives, most of us turn to marriage. This is where all social connectedness between people begins. In marriage, we crave the company and the self-affirmation that comes from our partner; we relish the deep and intimate connections and thrive on a companionship that embeds us in a cocoon of safety. Through receiving emotional support and nurture we generate feelings of mutual trust, loyalty and respect. Because of this, a good marriage has always been seen as the strongest predictor of personal happiness and wellbeing, the primary relationship that satisfies best our basic emotional needs.

The Role of Emotion in Marital Intimacy

Emotion is important to the creation of attachment bonds. Through our emotions we discover what matters most to us and what meaning we place on particular events and experiences.

In this seminar we want to invite you as couples to explore several important dimensions of your own marriage relationship that will help you achieve a greater sense of intimacy and connectedness. We will examine these topics:

- The ways a couple establish a strong emotional bond with each other and achieve a sense of intimacy in their marital relationship.
- How emotional closeness is developed through effective communication with one another.
- How you can successfully deal with the emotional component in marital conflict.

Maintaining Our Love Relationship

We don't know as much as we'd like about how marital relationships are maintained. While we know a great deal about the factors involved in the formation of relationships and about the causes and consequences of relationships that fail and end in dissolution, very little research has been done to determine the key factors involved in relationship maintenance. Current marriage researchers are convinced of several factors however.

Reciprocity – working together. Marriages are not self-generating. They do not occur spontaneously or by chance. They require a great deal of energy and investment to make them work. To keep love alive, a sense of passion, commitment and intimacy, good marriages require reciprocity. This is an ongoing process of caring and closeness in which two people work together to create an enduring relationship. In this relationship they both experience increasing fulfilment and satisfaction (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1994, p. 15).

Intentionality – being deliberate. Keeping love thriving and achieving marital growth requires that a couple be intentional. They can either allow their relationship to arbitrarily change as circumstances around them change, or they can be intentional about making choices that keep the flame of passion and love glowing and facilitate growth together. Marriage researcher John Gottman believes that married couples need to put forth effort in behaviours that keep marriage fresh. Couples who do nothing wrong but who do nothing to make things get better in their marriage will find that their marriage will still tend to get worse over time (Gottman, 1994, p. 61).

The importance of *maintaining* and *repairing* marriage. Another researcher, Jack Dominian, believes that marital love implies mutual growth—the ability to accept, change and grow together by acknowledging each other's reality, by unpacking one another's hidden world, and by demonstrating a capacity to forgive each other for not turning out to be all that was originally projected. Couples who want to keep their marriage healthy need to know how to nurture love over the whole marital life cycle by both *maintaining* and *repairing* their relationship (Dominian, 1995, pp. 114-121). *Maintaining* means using strategies that build togetherness, harmony, warmth, affection and effective communication. Repair means preventing negativity from escalating out of control. *Repair* is “the secret weapon of emotionally intelligent couples” says Gottman, because it enables them to strengthen their marriage by over-riding negativity (Gottman, 1999a, pp. 22, 23).

Howard Markman, founder of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) places similar emphasis on lowering the risks of marital conflict and distress (repair) and on taking measures to protect and enhance the relationship (maintenance). For him, maintenance measures include commitment, friendship, fun, sensuality, spirituality and religious intimacy (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994, pp. 119-305).

Byrne and Murren talk about the crucial role of “reciprocal positive evaluative behaviour” in maintaining a satisfying and loving relationship. “If couples can reinforce one another, interact gently, and behave in ways that please each partner, their relationship should obviously benefit” (Byrne & Murnen, 1988, pp. 96-302).

Biblical Counsel on Maintaining Love Relationships

The New Testament apostles were very clear in their instructions to the Christian Church about what it takes to keep marriages and relationships alive, healthy and strong. Their writings suggest a range of attitudes and behaviours that are designed to maximise the positive (protection measures) and minimise the negative (risk factors). The author of Hebrews suggests that we should “stay on good terms with each other, held together by love” and that we must “honour marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband” (Heb. 13: 1, 4 TM).

The apostle James encourages us to “live well, live wisely, live humbly” (James 3:13 TM). It is not the way you talk that counts, he says, but the way you live your life. He goes on to say that the way we treat each other should not be affected by the ebb and flow of how we feel but by our acknowledgement of God’s wise ways.

Real wisdom begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honour. (James 3:17, 18 TM)

The apostle Paul has much to say about maintaining love in our relationships. These behaviours, he believed, arise out of thankful hearts and lives filled with the grace of God. “Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other” (Col. 3:15 TM).

Love from the centre of who you are; don’t fake it . . . be good friends who love deeply

. . . don’t burn out; keep yourselves fuelled and aflame. . . laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other . . . don’t hit back; discover beauty in everyone” (Rom. 12: 9-17 TM).

Paul further instructs us to “look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out” (1Thess. 5:15 TM). He encourages us to allow the gifts of God’s Spirit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (Gal. 5:22, 23 NIV) to energise our relationship as we pour ourselves “out for each other in acts of love” (Eph. 4:2 TM).

Specific counsel for marriage comes from Paul also. He obviously sees respect as an important ingredient in building strong stable marriage. His counsel to couples follows immediately after he invites all to “out of respect for Christ be courteously reverent to one another” (Eph. 5:21 TM). Wives, he says, should “understand and support” their husbands (vs. 22) and husbands should “go all out in your love for your wives” (vs. 25). A husband should be a source of love and take the lead in cherishing, not dominating his wife. His love for her is to be a “a love marked by giving, not getting” (vs. 25), a love “designed to bring the best out of her” (vs. 26). A husband’s love for his wife is like Christ’s for the church, “His words evoke her beauty” (vs. 26).

The apostle Peter adds to this advice by suggesting that “in the new life of God’s grace” couples treat each other as equals, each honouring and delighting in their partner and seeking to be agreeable, sympathetic, loving, compassionate and humble (1 Peter 3: 7, 8 TM).

The New Testament writers understood that husbands and wives need to learn how to love in a special way in marriage. They saw that couples who respect, honour and support one another build a sense of meaning and purpose into their marriage and into their lives. The grace of God actively empowers and sustains such relationships.

What Does It Take To Keep Love Alive?

What helps develop a greater sense of intimacy in marriage? Gottman (1994) says couples must learn to *reconcile their conflicts* or differences constructively, *strengthen the positive side of their marriage* and regularly *inoculate their relationship* against the forces that lead to divorce (pp. 29, 30). He also believes that happy marriages are based on a deep friendship in which two people mutually respect and enjoy each others company. These are the couples who know each other intimately, who are well versed in their likes, dislikes, personality quirks, hopes and dreams, and who have an abiding regard and fondness for each other that is expressed in big and little ways day in day out (Gottman, 1999a, p. 19, 20).

Ten Qualities that Enhance Intimacy in Marriage

Here are the personal and interpersonal qualities, attitudes and behaviours that researchers highlight as important for maintaining and enhancing intimacy in marriage:

1. **Goodwill.** Displaying goodwill and cooperation toward your partner is absolutely fundamental to the survival and health of your relationship. Goodwill shows you’re on the other’s side and just as concerned about meeting their needs as you are your own. It signals that your spirits are open to each other and that you have empathy for your partner’s point of view. You want to play fair and not impugn your partner’s motives.
2. **Mutual respect and trust.** This is a central ingredient in all satisfying, long term marriage relationships. To show respect for your partner means that you recognise and accept them as a separate individual. You value and esteem them for who they are, not for what you can get from them. Respect honours and appreciates your partner’s separateness; values their contributions; acknowledges their differences; accepts their needs; and empathises with their feelings. Mutual respect can only be achieved when partners set appropriate boundaries, communicate honestly, and seek not to control one another. This separateness is the basis of the couple’s relational strength and reduces power struggles in the relationship. Usually, intimacy is only achieved when couples show each other an equality of importance and reciprocity of respect (Johnson & Greenberg, 1994, pp. 115, 119).

When two individuals are able to develop a relationship with mutual respect, a sense of love and trust will begin to emerge. This trust is critical to creating emotional safety and fostering true intimacy as the genuine individuality and true selves of each partner blossom and flourish.

3. **Effective communication.** Being able to communicate effectively is most important for connecting with each other. Couples who thrive in their marriage relationship indicate that they continue to dialogue with each other through good times as well as the difficult times in their relationship. A powerful part of intimate communication is emotional expression, because it conveys vulnerability, invites closeness, and, when congruent with non-verbal signs of emotion, conveys genuineness. Without emotional availability, intimacy is superficial and short lived (Carlson & Sperry, 1999, p. 147).

Communicating effectively with each other involves:

- being sensitive to and empathising with your partner's feelings,
 - being able to talk with measured honesty about your own inner experience and feelings,
 - actively listening,
 - speaking and responding non-defensively,
 - being able to validate what you have heard, understood and accepted as your partner's message,
 - being able to affirm and encourage your partner and demonstrate your affection for them,
 - being assertive and asking for what you want,
 - being able to share honestly your beliefs, values, difficulties and accomplishments.
4. **Mutual commitment.** Commitment is the one quality that contributes most to the continuing development of intimacy and growth in marriage. In marriages that last, intimacy and commitment go hand in hand. A lack of commitment on the part of one or both is one of the surest and quickest ways of undermining a marriage relationship. Any indication that there may be ambivalence or pretence about one's dedication, loyalty or faithfulness creates a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. This causes a partner to become preoccupied with concerns about abandonment. By the act of commitment marital partners express their desire to tenaciously overcome their differences and dedicate themselves to building greater intimacy in their relationship.

5. **Expressing appreciation and affection.** It is important for couples to consistently do and say things that give emotional support and provide positive encouragement for their marital partner. Research emphasises that expressions of affection and the free and frequent exchange of tenderness and touch also have a powerful positive effect. They signify a couple's connectedness and high regard. These caring attitudes and behaviours are so important for fuelling the sense of romance and passion that keeps the relationship alive and fresh and creating a sense of playfulness and friendship in the marriage. Couples need to be intentional in promoting their partner's well-being and in improving the sense of bonding, attachment and intimacy in their relationship
6. **Adaptability.** Intimacy is very much related to one's ability to be open to change and to embrace new ideas. A spirit of compromise and the skill to be able to shift one's attitude or behaviour to deal with changing circumstances or cope with crises is important to keeping love alive. Rigid individuals who insist on always being right are usually not people who are well-loved. This can be particularly true in marriages involving religious couples who feel there is only one right way to do or see things and develop a dogmatic, inflexible attitude unforgiving of differences and potentially destructive of the relationship. Successful couples are also flexible about their roles in their relationship. The way they adjust to situations and needs that change over time and the way they handle difficulties as they arise is critical to relational harmony and happiness.
7. **Resolve conflicts.** Conflict is the gateway to intimacy. This view of conflict believes that, while conflict can be a challenge to any relationship, it can also be a creative, growth producing process. Couples willing to face their differences and work through their conflicts to find mutually acceptable solutions to their problems have found the way to developing a greater sense of understanding and intimacy. Such a creative process seeks resolution of issues without partners being overwhelmed by negative emotions or causing each other to feel angry, criticised, misunderstood, ignored or put down. It gives partners the opportunity to say "sorry" and restore the much needed equilibrium to their marriage.

Important to intimacy is determining to replace the recycling of gripes and complaints with skills that enable the sharing of hurts and fears, admission of errors, and acceptance of personal limitations. In this way a couple can get on with enjoying their relationship together. Also, couples need to get rid of the ghosts of the past and any unresolved childhood issues that constantly keep coming back to haunt and hurt them and stop them from taking responsibility for their unhappiness and disquiet.

8. **Sexual satisfaction.** Giving expression to sexual desire—for physical and emotional intimacy and closeness—is a core aspect of marriage. The level

of sexual intimacy is often influenced by the overall state of the relationship. How willingly do a couple respect, trust and co-operate with each other? When marital partners understand and accommodate each other's sexual needs, their love-making has the ability to strengthen their relationship bonds far beyond the bedroom. Couples who lack the ability to pleasure each other or to nurture a sense of spontaneity, curiosity and playfulness often find that their sex life is unexciting, unsatisfying and boring and their relational bond diminished.

9. **Spiritual values.** Religious and spiritual values play a much more important role in marital stability and happiness than most people realise. A couple's spiritual orientation helps them to make sense out of life and provides meaning and purpose for virtually every aspect of their lives. While a person may be virtuous without being religious, religion does typically emphasise qualities most would consider virtuous—honesty, integrity, responsibility, commitment, forgiveness and compassion. Sociologist Andrew Greeley hypothesised that the warmer and more passionate one's religious imaging, the warmer and more passionate one's marriage. The higher one's scores on the "grace" scale, the more satisfying and intense the sexual relationship with one's partner is likely to be. He sees a direct correlation between marital intimacy and warm images of God (Coleman, 1992, pp. 139–141).
10. **Social connectedness.** Couples who develop and maintain healthy relationships with extended family and friends and others in the community find that this involvement has a positive effect on their marriage. The access to additional resources that such relationships typically supply improves their sense of self-esteem and relational skills. Their marital relationship is energised and empowered through the creation of a greater sense of adaptability, tolerance and openness to sharing.

Recognizing the Signs of a Marriage in Trouble

Researchers have consistently found that the level of marital satisfaction declines steadily across the early years of a couple's relationship, finding its lowest level during the adolescent years of the family life cycle (see Figure 1). Although this decline may coincide with particular periods in the life cycle, Clements and Markman have suggested that marital satisfaction is better explained by the way partners interact and treat each other (Clements et al., 1997, pp. 339–343). Couples often do not recognise the early warning signs that their marital relationship is in trouble. Once they recognise the warning signals and realize that their negativity is eroding the positives that feed their relationship,

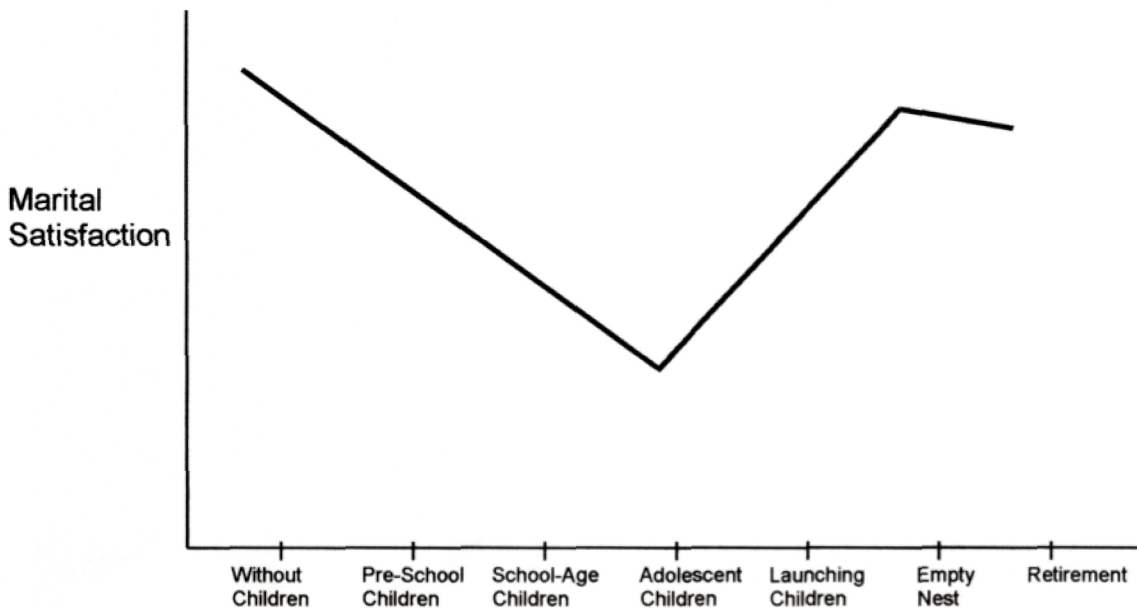


Figure 1 - Marriage Satisfaction across the Marriage Life Cycle

they can take steps to eliminate dysfunctional and destructive interaction patterns. The most common warning signs that emotional distance is developing in a marriage are identified in the following list.

1. **Complaints of loss of feeling.** A common sign is when one or both partners complain that they are no longer “in love” with their partner. Frequently, this loss of feeling is related to the fact that their anxiety and fears have been unexpressed or “bottled up.” Feelings of resentment, bitterness, even hatred have likely been harboured by one against the other.
2. **Recurring unresolved arguments.** Negativity and recurring, unresolved patterns of conflict have damaging effects on a marital relationship.
3. **Loss of interest in sex.** Sex can often be a barometer of marital health. Couples typically will show a lack of interest or attraction in each other when they don’t feel emotionally close to one another.
4. **Signs of depression or withdrawal by one of the partners.** Feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, helplessness, or a fear of losing the relationship may cause one of the partners to withdraw and become depressed. A lack of sympathetic attention may account for the loss of enthusiasm and optimism in a marriage more than being stressed or over-worked (Gottman, 1994, pp. 29, 30).
5. **Abandonment of joint activities.** When partners begin to live parallel lives, there is little opportunity for time together or sharing in pleasurable activities that increase their feelings of attachment.

6. **An affair.** Becoming emotionally and sexually involved with someone outside the marriage can be a “cry for help” and a plea for both partners to acknowledge that the relationship is floundering.
7. **Preoccupation with interests and activities outside the marriage.** The investment of time and energy by one partner in career, work, church or other interests and activities may leave the other partner feeling neglected, even betrayed.
8. **Arguments over child-rearing.** Fighting over their respective methods and commitment to child-raising is another sign of marital breakdown. One partner may form an alliance with one or more of the children against the other partner.
9. **Increased fatigue.** Signs of tiredness and reduced ability to meet responsibilities at work may indicate that a lot of emotional energy is being expended on negative relational issues.

Emotional Barriers in Troubled Marriages

Early warning signs of a marriage in difficulty are usually accompanied by other issues that constitute serious barriers to intimacy. Some of these barriers include:

- **Fear of closeness.** One finds it hard to openly share their thoughts and feelings with their partner for fear of being hurt. They “play it safe” and keep their distance.
- **Unresolved anger.** Carrying hurt, anger, grief, or other unresolved personal issues will eventually erode intimacy. The mismanagement of anger is probably the greatest single barrier to marital intimacy.
- **Need for power and control.** Rigid, inflexible and controlling partners often use manipulation to stay in control, to ward off threats, or avoid discomfort and vulnerability.
- **Low self-esteem.** A partner who feels inferior or worthless does not contribute very much positive energy to the relationship. When one is tentative, uncertain, negative, or finds it hard to take initiatives with their partner, the relationship is affected. In most instances it is hard for the marriage to carry an emotionally hurting or wounded person for very long. Frequently this burden creates feelings of resentment in the other partner.
- **Jealousy and mistrust.** Doubting a partner or questioning their love and acceptance seriously undermines trust and confidence in the relationship. Sexual jealousy, arising from fear of loss or exclusion accompanied by feelings of anger, anxiety and resentment, is particularly distressing. It threatens the sense of security and blocks intimacy.

- **Idealisation of the relationship.** Some couples lack a sense of realism about their relationship and hang on to romantic notions of love. Expectations of unattainable levels of intimacy can stifle the relationship and create feelings of frustration and alienation.

Couple Exercise: *Assessing your Own Level of Marital Satisfaction*

Using the response sheet *Marital Satisfaction*, invite couples to:

1. Respond to the questionnaire separately.
2. Join together in exploring their individual responses with each other.
3. Discuss areas in their relationship where they clearly have differences and concerns.
4. Encourage them to highlight 3 areas for further dialogue and resolution.

MARITAL SATISFACTION

The following series of questions relates to the level of satisfaction that you usually find in your interaction with your spouse.

1. How satisfied are you with the way in which you and your partner usually handle each of the following areas of your family life? Please circle the number that best represents how satisfied you are in each area.

Draw a square around each answer that you think your partner will select in answering each question for him/herself.

	Mostly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Moderately Unsatisfied	Mostly Unsatisfied	
a. Our commitment to each other	1	2	3	4	5
b. Amount of communication with each other	1	2	3	4	5
c. Depth of sharing with each other	1	2	3	4	5
d. Display of affection for each other	1	2	3	4	5
e. Sharing feelings between the two of you	1	2	3	4	5
f. Trust in each other	1	2	3	4	5
g. Sexual fulfilment	1	2	3	4	5
h. Amount and quality of free time spent together	1	2	3	4	5
i. Management of chores and/or other home responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
j. The level of our financial security	1	2	3	4	5
k. How we manage our money	1	2	3	4	5
l. Social interaction and time with friends	1	2	3	4	5
m. Relationships with in-laws and other relatives	1	2	3	4	5
n. The way we support each other (careers, parenting, tough times)	1	2	3	4	5
o. The way we make decisions	1	2	3	4	5
p. How we manage conflict	1	2	3	4	5
q. Our church involvements	1	2	3	4	5
r. Our spiritual interaction	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please read over the list and tick the three most important areas that you feel concerned about and that need further working on together.

Session 2
Communication: The Key to Emotional Closeness
Leadership Resources

Being able to communicate is unquestionably the most important human survival skill. Typically, nobody actually teaches us how to communicate effectively, yet our whole existence depends on our ability to transfer information from ourselves to others and build relationships with them. Good communication is a wonderful gift and provides the key to understanding, friendship and intimacy. Through good communication we give and receive love, express our thoughts and feelings, and acquire an appreciation of others' needs and wishes.

The Bible writers speak of the powerful effect that words can have in our relationships. "Be gracious in your speech," says Scripture, recognising that the goal of all communication is "to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out" (Colossians 4: 6 TM). Elsewhere, Paul admonishes us to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4: 15 NIV) and recognise that honesty and openness in our relationships with one another is an important ingredient to making intimate connections (cf. Proverbs 24: 26 NIV). The wise man Solomon endorses the concept that "cutting words wound and maim," but "kind words heal and help" (Proverbs 15:4 TM).

Communication Is Vital to Relationship Satisfaction

Communication is vital to marriage. Through the process of dialogue a couple access and articulate feelings, resolve differences, and share personal ideas, beliefs and values. Unique patterns of interacting with one another based on expressions, gestures, exchanges and symbols develop, creating for them a relationship that either strives or thrives. Their own special style of communicating forms a powerful emotional bond of shared meaning and enjoyment (Prager, 1995, p. 57).

Reliable research on intimate relationships has found that "communication is a primary determinant of relationship satisfaction" (Whisman, 1997, p. 395), and that patterns of marital interaction constitute the key to predicting the quality of the marriage relationship (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997, p. 160). The degree of positive regard that marital partners have for each other, the amount of their interaction, the effectiveness of their communication, and the level of emotional gratification they enjoy, all contribute towards their sense of fulfilment, stability and satisfaction in the relationship (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997, pp. 161, 162).

Principles of Effective Communication

In order for couples to understand the dynamics involved in effective communication they need to acknowledge the following six principles:

1. **The skills of communication are learned.** Learning to communicate effectively is a skill we all need to be taught. The process of building better relationships is learned through developing the skills of self-awareness, self-disclosure, empathic listening, responding and confirmation.
2. **It is impossible NOT to communicate:** Communication researcher Pat Noller says that “it is impossible to not communicate! Many people do not understand this because they limit their concept of communication to words and fail to realise that communication is going on whenever we are in the presence of someone else, even if we are only communicating that we want to have nothing to do with them” (Noller, 1984, p. 1). Communication involves words, but it is bigger than mere words; it takes several forms—verbal, non-verbal and written. It occurs at three levels: (1) content—what is being shared; (2) feeling—how you feel about the content and relate to the message; and (3) meaning—the interpretation, significance and value we attach to the message and our emotional response to its content.
3. **How you feel about yourself affects how you communicate.** Our ability to dialogue with, listen to and connect with others is heavily influenced by the level of our self-esteem. If our inner dialogue about ourselves is immersed in feelings of inferiority, inadequacy or self pity, then we become distracted or unfocused in our communication with others.
4. **Empathic listening is a vital part of good communication.** In most instances, it is not what you say that counts the most in the communication process but what others hear you say that matters. The art of listening—accurately receiving and interpreting the message—is ultimately more significant than the sending of the message. As Stephen Covey says, “First seek to understand, then be understood” (Covey, 1989, pp. 236-260).
5. **Playback before talkback.** One of the cardinal rules of effective communication is that we always need to check out what we heard the other person say to make sure that we are not making any incorrect assumptions about the message we have received. So often our own biases or prejudices can cause us to make inaccurate or faulty interpretations.
6. **Feelings are the essence of communication.** All communication involves the expression of emotion, either through the direct expression of positive or negative feelings or through the intent or innuendo of language. One of the most critical factors in the communication process is the ability to identify and understand the feelings being expressed. Feelings are the gateway to a person’s heart and soul. Connecting with another person’s feelings constitutes the most powerful part of the intimacy process. When we truly connect with feelings, there is a sense of closeness, vulnerability

and genuineness. Frequently, the emotional connection between two people at the feeling level is something that happens beyond the use of words.

These six principles bring into focus issues at the core of all effective marital communications. They highlight the need for marital partners to use and develop the skills and behaviours critical to growing a strong, healthy relationship.

Levels of Communication

Our freedom and comfort in communicating is influenced by how safe and secure we feel about ourselves when we are with other people. The extent of our willingness to go out of ourselves to reveal our thoughts and feelings to others is described by John Powell in his book “Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?” (Powell, 1969, pp. 50-62). He suggests that there are five levels at which we communicate with others. Each level leads to greater depths of intimacy. See Figure 2.

Level five: Cliché conversation. There is minimal self-disclosure at this level. We talk in clichés, such as, “How’s it going?” “What have you been doing?” or “Good to see you.” This conversation is superficial and shares nothing of who we are or what we feel about anything. In marriage, this level of dialogue can cause a lot of frustration, resentment and distance.

Level four: Reporting the facts. Just as we may hide behind clichés, so we avoid personal disclosure by just giving news, stories, and narratives that involve others. Content to pass on data, sometimes gossip, about people and events in our world, we give nothing of ourselves and invite nothing from our partner in return.

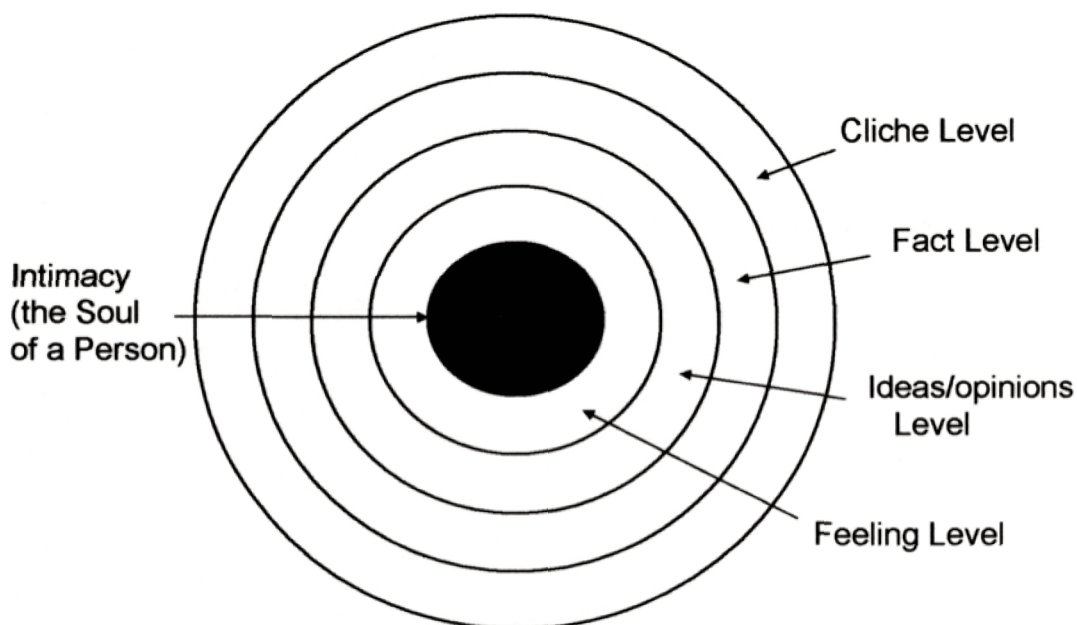


Figure 2 - Five Levels of Communication

Level three: My ideas and opinions. In expressing some of our own beliefs and views we give our partner some chance of getting to know us more intimately. However, we tend to be cautious, checking for signs of acceptance as we risk sharing a little of our ideas, thoughts, decisions or judgements.

Level two: My feelings and emotions. Communication at this level reveals a lot more about you and what goes on inside you. Your feelings clearly differentiate you from others and tell your partner who you really are. At this level, genuine emotional honesty and openness occurs and intimate connections can take place.

Level one: Intimate communication. Authentic communion occurs at this level between two people who are willing to risk being absolutely open, honest and genuine with each other. This personal encounter leads to deep insights, authentic friendship, emotional connection, mutual empathy, and understanding.

The Process of Communication

Now let us turn our attention to the six stages of the communication process. By understanding the dynamics involved in the way two people connect with each other, a marital couple can be encouraged to understand how their emotional attachments are formed and be motivated to develop the skills required.

Communication involves a “sender” and a “receiver”—someone who encodes and someone who decodes the message sent. Both individuals need to use specific skills in order for connection and understanding to occur without interference. Both need an attitude of respect and the ability to attend (listen) and be concrete (specific) if effective communication is to take place. The sender (encoder) needs to be able to self-disclose with openness and honesty and the receiver (decoder) needs the skills of emphatic listening and the ability to create a safe and receptive context in which understanding can occur.

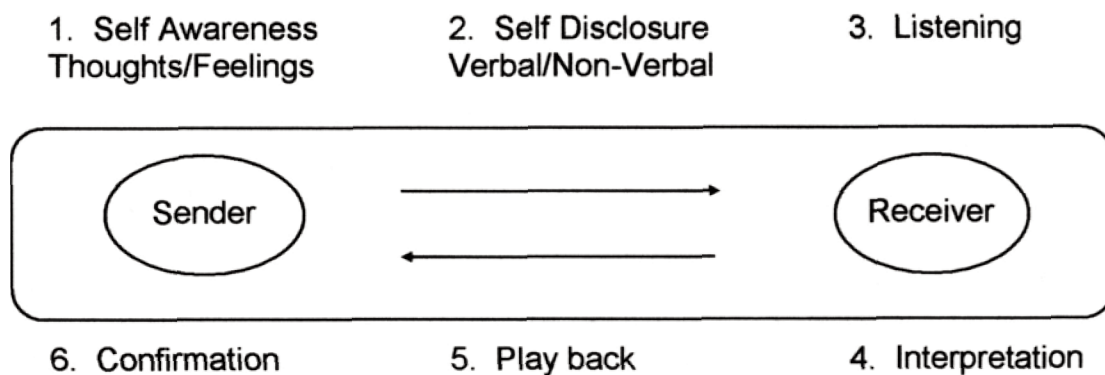


Figure 3 - The Process of Communication

Figure 3 indicates the six stages that must occur in the transfer of information from one person to another in order for them to achieve connection and experience a shared sense of meaning. These six stages actually highlight the six skills which are crucial in the process of making connection: self-awareness, self-disclosure, listening, interpretation, play-back, confirmation. A brief description of each skill and its part in the communication process follows.

Self-awareness. In terms of self-awareness, effective couple communication is dependent on two essential considerations: first, our ability to be aware of own thoughts and feelings and second, our awareness of how we feel about others. If we view ourselves as inadequate, inferior or insecure, this will affect the encoding of our message. If we see others as uncaring, unsupportive or aggressive, then this will also tend to shape our encoding. Being able to successfully encode messages to our marriage partner is vitally affected by our feelings of worth and self esteem. If we are not in touch with who we are and how we feel, we may have great difficulty formulating what we really want to say to others. Feelings that are not acknowledged cannot be shared. Other factors can distort our ability to reveal what we want to communicate to others also—our lack of expressiveness, our ambivalence about certain issues, or our active intention to hide or cover up feelings of anger, frustration, fear, dominance or deception (Noller, 1984, p. 71).

Self-disclosure. This very significant component in the process of communication involves verbally sharing our private thoughts, ideas, attitudes, beliefs and feelings. The emotional expressiveness involved helps develop rapport and increases the potential of the relationship with the other person. Self-disclosure also includes non-verbal sharing—a meaningful glance, an affectionate touch, other emotional expressions such as tears or laughter, and shared sexuality (Prager, 1995, p. 21).

The importance of non-verbal self-disclosure is grossly underestimated by many couples. Many are simply unaware of the powerful impact that messages expressed this way have on their experience of intimacy. Non-verbal communication accounts for about 93% of the message communicated, with only 7% being contained in words. 55% of the message is transmitted through body language or “visual aspects” (facial expression, gaze, posture, gestures) and 38% by means of the “vocal aspects” (tone of voice, loudness, tempo, pitch). Non-verbals therefore are the primary vehicle through which are conveyed one’s emotions, interpersonal attitudes of respect and empathy, and the feelings one has about the relationship (Noller, 1984, pp. 5-7).

Listening. Undoubtedly, listening is the most important communication skill, because it is the means by which the sender (the “encoder”) is affirmed as understandable and acceptable. On the other hand, nothing deflates and hurts us more than being ignored or cut off. Communication specialist Michael Nichols believes that listening is powerful because it enables us to immerse ourselves in another’s experience. Listening is the gift of our attention and understanding, making others feel validated and valued. Effective listening creates good will and provides the best way for us to enjoy others and learn from them. Through listening, couples connect with each other, build bonds of understanding, and strengthen their relationship (Nichols, 1995, pp. 4, 6, 10).

Interpretation. For communication to be effective, the message must be accurately interpreted. Questions that should be in the receiver's mind are: What is being said by the sender? What is being felt? What does it mean? Decoding by the receiver must occur in a way that shows sensitivity and responsiveness to what matters most to the sender, i.e., (1) decoding effectively their feeling and (2) grasping the meaning and significance of their message. Nothing is more validating to a marriage partner than feeling heard and understood accurately.

Breakdowns can occur at any one of the six stages in the communication process, but no stage is more critical than the interpretation stage. *Knowing that your partner understands how you think and feel is the heart of making connection.* Disconnection, however, is common. Faulty decoding of the message causes effective communication to break down. Factors responsible for these interferences or breakdowns can include:

- words or meanings that are ambiguous,
- a negative attitude towards our partner,
- assumptions we make about the topic/issue that betray preconceived biases or prejudices,
- emotional defensiveness that is triggered by a self-absorption or feelings of hurt, fear or anger,
- interrupting or jumping to conclusions,
- the past history of the relationship (Noller, 1984, pp. 72, 185).

Play-back. In this part of the listening process, sometimes called "reflective listening," we play back to the sender our understanding of what they have just said. We are checking to see that we accurately received the message and are reassuring the sender that we have taken their message seriously. As Hugh MacKay says, "reflective listening is the restraint which ensures that we will receive a message before we react to it." If our playback is inaccurate, either in content or tone, the speaker is given an opportunity to correct our understanding of what has been said (Mackay, 1994, p. 178). The most effective method to use in playing back what we have heard is to paraphrase the total message—both the cognitive and feeling parts—so the sender can confirm that what they said has been "read" accurately.

Confirmation. Communication is completed when the sender confirms that connection has been made, the listener has accurately heard the message and acknowledged the reality of their (the sender's) feelings. This act of confirmation is a moment of agreement that creates emotional intensity. It conveys the sender's appreciation, acceptance and affirmation for the support and understanding that has been achieved. It greatly increases the sense of emotional bonding and the level of intimacy in the relationship. If confirmation is not given, then the sender and receiver can try again to establish the connection.

Understanding these stages of the communication process highlights two very important issues for marital communication that must be underscored. First, non-verbal communication plays a vital part in the process of emotional bonding. Receiving the total message not only insures a greater understanding, but provides the key to emotional connection. Failure to decode the nuances of feelings transmitted through the non-verbal channel greatly inhibits the prospects for intimacy and dwarfs the potential for emotional closeness in the marriage. So often in marriage, communication takes place at the content level, but getting to the deeper levels of feelings and meaning does not occur because couples fail to listen carefully to all that is being communicated.

Secondly, listening is crucial to marital communication. Poor listening is one of the greatest dangers facing marital partners. Evidence suggests that people typically use only 25% of their listening capacity. We actually screen out, ignore, distort or misunderstand about 75% of all that we hear every day.

The Art of Listening

As has been already stated, listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give to another person. It is an act of love and caring. With it, we convey a very powerful message of affirmation about the value we attach to the individual who is speaking to us. In *The Lost Art of Listening*, Michael Nichols (1995) points out why listening is important:

- It is the way we receive information about others, our relationships, our world and even ourselves.
- It is the means whereby we validate the experiences of others and they recognise and validate our experiences.
- It nourishes our self-worth and helps us to feel loveable, acceptable and worthwhile as human beings.
- It has the ability to shape our character and make us feel secure.
- It is the bridge between the spaces that divide or separate us from others. We all yearn to escape the isolation of our existence to find community in the land of understanding (pp. 15, 16).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together* (1954) writes of listening as a ministry. He says that the first service we owe to others consists of listening to them; that loving another person means learning to listen to them. Yet so often as Christians we feel we must always contribute something to others, thus forgetting that “listening can be a greater service than speaking” (p. 75). He then goes on to say:

Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God, either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God, too. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life (p. 75)

The Bible writers also confirm the importance of listening. Solomon said “the wise man learns by listening” (Proverbs 21:11 LB) and “answering before listening is both stupid and rude” (Proverbs 18:13 TM). The apostle James admonished everyone in the early Christian church to “be quick to listen and slow to speak” (James 1:19 NIV).

So why is it that we all find it so hard to listen? Nichols suggests that “to listen well, we must forget ourselves and submit to the other person’s need for attention,” something that is not easy to do (Nichols, 1995, p. 3). Being preoccupied with our own immediate needs and concerns does prevent us from listening. Some of the common reasons for our failure to listen are:

- **Inattention** due to fatigue or busyness. Listening requires focused attention, energy and effort.
- **Preoccupation** with our own thoughts, feelings, work, needs.
- **Distraction**, either by our own inner dialogue, by noise or activity levels, or by trigger words or emotions generated by the dialogue.
- **Information overload**—too much information or information that we don’t understand, e.g. technical language.
- **Actively and intentionally blocking** the communication process by filtering out what we don’t want to hear, changing the subject, blaming the other person, busily rehearsing what to say in response, or giving a solution prematurely.
- **Boredom**—“I’ve heard all this before!”
- **Making assumptions** or snap judgements about what or how something is being said.
- Being focused on the details of the story and **missing the feelings and emotions being expressed**.

According to psychologist Carl Rogers (Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1995), being a good listener requires being actively involved in the process of dialogue. Rogers made a clear distinction between “passive listening” and what he called “active listening”. Passively listening, he said, involves merely hearing the topic or monologue of a speaker, whereas “active listening” involves two people engaged in interacting together, each listening intently and trying to understand and respond to what the other is saying. “Active listening” involves three key components:

1. **Listening to words and feelings**. The listener pays close attention to hearing not only what is being said (the words), but hearing and understanding the feelings behind the words as well.
2. **Empathising with the speaker**. Empathy is about understanding and responding to the emotional experience of the other person. The listener

perceives with sensitivity what the other person is seeing and feeling. The listener puts himself in the position of the speaker and endeavours to see the world through their eyes. Empathy also means that the listener develops the capacity to let the speaker know that they are understood and respected.

3. **Suspending judgement.** The listener accepts the thoughts and feelings expressed by the speaker without making any judgement, without condemnation. The listener suspends their own value judgements and receives the whole message before they react to it. It suggests that the listener is willing to allow the speaker to have their feelings without any attempt to avoid, deny, fix, control or invalidate them.

Learning the art of actively listening is a skill that every couple needs to learn. It is often hard for us to be objective about how well we listen, because we are frequently blind to the bad habits that we have developed that prevent us from maintaining our focus and attending to the message being delivered. In addition to that, we find it hard to believe that our own anxiety to please or control could be the reason why our responses block the communication process.

Traits of a good listener. Here then, are a few traits of a good listener:

- Maintains good eye contact with the person speaking
- Responds with a smile, nod of the head or shows concern
- Pays close attention “to all that is going on”
- Does not interrupt the flow of information
- Maintains an open, accepting attitude and posture
- Learns to listen (even in the silences) and does not push the pace or rush the speaker
- Is empathetic, able to put themselves in the other person’s shoes
- Remains poised and emotionally controlled
- Does not change the topic, but allows the speaker to finish expressing their thoughts
- Connects with feelings
- Repeats those parts of the message not clearly understood
- Clarifies and reflects back the thoughts and feelings of the speaker by using a paraphrase of what has been said

Summary. It is important for marital couples to be consciously aware, not only of their differences, but of the need to communicate with each other. Failure to connect at the emotional level is the major reason a lot of marriages struggle to survive. When misunderstanding does occur, most couples stop listening to each other, become defensive and unreceptive to new information.

For an individual to be able to communicate effectively with their marital partner they need to be willing to reveal their inner feelings and risk extending themselves beyond those areas where they feel comfortable and unafraid. They must also be prepared to make it safe for their partner to communicate with and respond to them with empathy, acceptance and trust. One very good way to begin extending oneself is to make a point of telling ones partner about positive feelings, as these are easily accepted and present little risk. This action will tend to increase the opportunity for intimacy by reducing fears and inhibitions. It will create a climate in which it will be easier to reveal other feelings that are more difficult to share.

Couple Exercise: Practicing Your Active Listening Skills

As an exercise for this session, invite the couples in your group to practise their active listening skills with the following exercise:

The husband will tell a story about “one thing that really annoys me is” (For the sake of keeping a skill-building focus, the husband is directed to choose an issue outside their interpersonal relationship.) He has 3 minutes to tell his story. During this time the wife is to actively listen at two levels—(1) for the content of what is being said, and (2) for the feelings being expressed, which may be behind/beneath the words. She is not to say anything for the entire 3 minutes. She is to maintain appropriate eye contact, show interest and be pleasant, but say nothing.

At the end of 3 minutes, she will be given 1 minute to summarize or paraphrase what she heard him say, to give indication that she “heard” all that he said. He will validate her response if her feedback is accurate. If she fails to connect with all or only some of his story and his feelings, then she will need to try again and clarify further her understanding so that connection is established.

Repeat the exercise, with the wife now telling her story around “one thing that really frustrates me is” (Again, the wife should choose an issue outside their interpersonal relationship.) The husband does the listening and then has 1 minute to provide feedback.

Finally, call all couples together and debrief this learning experience by discussing together as a group what they observed and learned about the listening process. They are not to discuss the content of each couple’s story, but the listening exercise itself. The leader(s) may wish to explore such questions as, “What was the most difficult thing about that exercise for you?” or “What did you learn about effective listening from that experience?” or “Why is listening so difficult?”

Couple Exercise: *Couple Communication*

Using the response sheet *Couple Communication*, invite couples to:

1. Respond to the questionnaire separately.
2. Join together in exploring their individual responses with each other.
3. Discuss areas in their relationship where they clearly have differences and concerns.
4. Encourage them to highlight 3 areas for further dialogue and resolution.

Couple Communication

Assess your satisfaction regarding the communication you have with your partner.

- Circle the response (1-5) that best describes the way you feel about each aspect of your marital communication. Draw a square around each answer that you think your partner will select in answering each question for him/herself.

	Definitely False	Usually False	Never True nor False	Usually True	Definitely True
1. I find it very easy to express all my true feelings to my partner	1	2	3	4	5
2. My partner is always a good listener	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am very happy with the way my partner and I talk with each other	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sometimes I am afraid to ask my partner for what I want	1	2	3	4	5
5. When we are having a problem, my partner often gives me the silent treatment	1	2	3	4	5
6. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me	1	2	3	4	5
7. My partner sometimes makes comments that put me down	1	2	3	4	5
8. I wish my partner was more willing to share their true feelings with me	1	2	3	4	5
9. I don't always share negative feelings I have about my partner because I'm afraid they will get angry	1	2	3	4	5
10. Often I do not tell my partner what I'm feeling because they should already know how I feel	1	2	3	4	5
11. My partner tends to talk too much and often monopolises the conversation	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am always a good listener	1	2	3	4	5
13. I enjoy the way my partner encourages me and expresses appreciation for what I've done	1	2	3	4	5

	Definitely False	Usually False	Never True nor False	Usually True	Definitely True
14. My partner let's me have my say without interrupting			1 2	3 4	5
15. I tend to avoid conflict with my partner and withdraw when confronted			1 2	3 4	5
16. I show my negative emotions non-verbally			1 2	3 4	5

- Please look over the list and **tick** the three most important areas of communication that you feel need to be improved, and share these concerns with each other.

Adapted from The Couple Communication Scale by D H Olson, D G Fournier and J M Druckman.
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Session 3

Understanding and Dealing with Marital Conflict

Leadership Resources

Handling Marriage's Greatest Obstacle

It is not how much a couple love each other, how great their sex life is, how they deal with their money, or even how they discipline their children that best predicts the quality of their relationship. It is the way they deal with their differences (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994, p. 6). Current research reveals that the greatest obstacle to intimacy and satisfaction in marriage is a couple's inability to successfully handle disagreement and conflict. Virginia Satir believed that individuals cannot be real or develop a truly human and zestful relationship with one another until they have confronted and successfully handled their differentness (Satir, 1972, p. 138). Being able to deal with "differentness"—the whole range of individual differences—is what constitutes the core experience of every successful marriage.

Reconciling differences. John Gottman notes how significant he has found this conflict resolution aspect throughout his last twenty years of research on marriage:

The one lesson I have learned from my years of research is that a lasting marriage results from a couple's ability to resolve the conflicts that are inevitable in any relationship. Many couples tend to equate a low level of conflict with happiness and believe the claim "we never fight" is a sign of health. But I believe we grow in our relationships by reconciling our differences. That is how we become more loving people and truly experience the fruits of marriage. (Gottman, 1994, p. 28)

Couples come to know each other more intimately by *reconciling* their differences. Gottman is not suggesting that marriage is about *resolving* or neutralising differences but about how well married partners learn to live together in spite of their inherent differences. What matters most is the way they handle the inevitable differences that arise whenever two people form a partnership. This raises the question "Why is it that dealing with our differences is so difficult?"

The Role of Emotion in Marital Conflict

Thanks to marital researchers like Gottman and others, the causes of unhappiness and distress in marriage are no longer a mystery. We now know that the nature of marital distress is related to the way couples handle their differentness and reconcile the problems that develop within their marriage when one or both feel (1) *flooded* by negative emotions and (2) trapped in narrow, negative interactional patterns that constrict and contain conflict and regulate feelings of fear and rejection (Johnson, 1996, pp. 1, 3).

We need to acknowledge the compelling role that emotion plays among couples as they try to resolve their differences. Once again, we must focus on the importance of the emotional bond that exists between two married people and the interactional process of attachment by which it is formed. The damage done to the marriage relationship by ongoing unresolved conflict, the feelings of vulnerability, insecurity and abandonment, can only be repaired as attention is given to developing those attachment behaviours that rebuild and strengthen the couple's emotional bond.

Many difficulties in marriage have their genesis in the way couples process their feelings with each other. Problems often arise when married partners fail to accurately read one another's emotions, attempt to avoid or control the expression of feelings, or otherwise respond negatively to emotions within the relationship. This tends to foster cycles of negative interaction and create misunderstandings and distress that result in hostility, defensiveness, or withdrawal (Johnson & Greenberg, 1994, pp. 302, 309).

Fear of being misunderstood or rejected. Central to the issue of marital conflict is the degree to which partners feel vulnerable to each other or afraid that they will not be understood or supported emotionally. The fear of being attacked, abandoned, rejected, or being found incompetent or inadequate tends to restrict the way in which information is shared or processed. It also evokes behaviours that ultimately put the marriage at risk. When feelings of frustration, fear, anger and hurt remain after an intense emotional exchange, a partner can be left brooding over their wounds and contemplating the future state of the relationship. These feelings inhibit the growth of trust and intimacy and prevent the development of meaningful connection.

Heightened feelings of anxiety and insecurity. When couples are reactive to each other, the second major issue emerges. In their attempt to deal with the fear of being misunderstood or rejected, heightened feelings of anxiety and insecurity are generated within married partners. This anxiety is seen by many researchers as an attachment issue. The anxieties and insecurities foster the establishment of recurring cycles of negative interaction. These are attempts to re-establish connection by pleading or demanding that the other partner become more accessible and responsive. If this does not happen, the pursuing partner may intensify their efforts through behaviours like protesting, clinging or simply avoiding or withdrawing from the other partner, until the other partner becomes more available and responsive and re-establishes meaningful contact.

These negative repetitive cycles of interaction are maintained by emotional exchanges that take on a life of their own as married partners critically attack, condemn, blame and even show contempt towards each other. This negativity which begins to pervade the whole relationship can often result in the development of the common "attack – withdraw" pattern. Pursuit on the part of one partner is met by the other distancing himself. When a couple fails to resolve these negative patterns and to build positive connections with each other, respect and goodwill begin to disappear and the marriage really struggles to survive (Johnson & Greenberg, 1994, pp. 302, 309).

According to Gottman, what really separates contented couples from those in deep misery is the way they successfully establish a healthy balance between the positive and negative feelings and actions toward each other. With contented couples, negative feelings and frequent arguments are balanced with lots of love and compassion; lots of empathy and affirmation; plenty of touching, smiling and laughing. The predominance of these positive behaviours acts like a nutrient, nurturing the affection, joy and contentment that strengthen the couple's ability to deal with their differences and weather the rough storms of conflict and disagreement.

Interestingly, Gottman has the view that conflict can serve a positive function in marriage. By facilitating the cycle of closeness and distance, conflict actually creates the dynamic that prevents stagnation and stimulates relational renewal and intimacy. He suggests that a certain amount of negativity may be required to foster creativity in the marriage and help it to thrive. While that may be true, it is quite clear that too much negativity is definitely destructive to the relationship (Gottman, 1994, pp. 56-67).

Defining Conflict

Robert Bolton believes that “you cannot find personal intimacy without conflict. Love and conflict are inseparable (Bolton, 1979, p. 207). That may be true! However, even though conflict may be a normal, unavoidable part of our relationships, it is not something we seek or enjoy. Most of us find conflict disruptive and destructive, and will do anything to avoid it, even to the point of suppressing our feelings and emotional reactions when we are confronted, challenged, or frustrated.

The Scriptures warn us about the destructive effect that negative behaviours and conflict can have in our relationship. The wise man Solomon said that “gentle words cause life and health, griping brings discouragement” (Prov. 15:4 LB). He instructed us to remember that “it is hard to stop a quarrel once it starts, so don't let it begin” (Prov. 17:14 LB).

Paul urged two individuals at Philippi to “iron out their differences and make up. God does not want his children holding grudges” (Phil. 4:1 TM). He also wrote a long letter to the believers at Ephesus counselling them not to “let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs . . . and get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander . . . Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph. 4:29, 31 NIV).

Conflict can be defined as “an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another” (Dominian, 1995, p. 87). Newton Malony sees conflict as a fight for life. He proposes that we make a clear distinction between conflict and problems. *Conflict* is about our inner response to those external threats that endanger our status, identity and self esteem. When our self esteem suffers a real or imaginary blow, we are forced to defend ourselves or be psychologically devastated. The term problem he applies to those situations that involve disputes, differences of opinion and struggle over goals and values between two individuals or groups of people (Malony, 1989, pp. 15, 18, 31).

The Basic Components of Conflict

There are two basic components to conflict, the *emotional component* and the specific issues component. The *emotional component* constitutes the relational dimension including feelings of anger, distrust, defensiveness, scorn, resentment, fear and rejection. Specific issues involves conflicting needs and values, disagreements over policies and practises, and differing conceptions of roles and uses of resources. These two components are often intertwined and difficult to separate (Bolton, 1979, p. 217). The specific issues frequently generate emotional conflict and the emotional component can tend to multiply the specific issues.

Two guiding principles generally apply when one is dealing with these two components of conflict. First, if the relationship is spontaneous and healthy, the emotional or relational aspect will tend to recede into the background. Secondly, the more one struggles to define or acknowledge the emotional component, the less importance is attached to the specific issues or content aspect of the conflict. Couples should be encouraged to identify these two components when conflict emerges in their relationship.

Deal constructively with the emotional component first. When adrenaline is flowing and emotions are aroused, when anger is being expressed either verbally or non-verbally, married partners are more volatile and ready for combat. It is very important that they learn to listen and connect first with each other's feelings. Nothing will be resolved until first they connect with the frustration and hurt that motivates the anger.

Attend to specific issues second. When couples have first connected with the feelings, then they can seek to rationally examine the specific issues.

Sources of Conflict in Marriage

Money, sex, and communication. A number of issues typically create conflict for marital couples. Issues tend to change in importance and intensity throughout the family life cycle. Three main issues, however, are *money, sex, and communication*. They can be difficult because they are symptomatic of fundamental core issues related to survival, emotional security and intimacy. These specific issues are regularly encountered, therefore a means of managing them must be found if the relationship is to function effectively.

Poor communication. The initial complaint in marriage counselling is often “we just can't communicate.” *Poor communication* is a common cause of conflict and disagreement arising when partners find it difficult to express their needs, wants and feelings or when they resort to constantly questioning, criticising or condemning their partner. If couples fail to share ideas, opinions and general information with each other, this often leaves them feeling isolated, ignored and emotionally unsupported. When this happens, they typically end up in the “pursue-withdraw” pattern.

Relationship and family matters. Other conflicts are related to *relationship and family matters*—lack of agreed upon leadership in the relationship. Who is responsible for

making the final decisions? How will housework be distributed? What happens when there is failure to complete household chores? The discipline and care of children, appropriate boundaries with in-laws and extended family, balancing work and family are additional sources of conflict.

Differences. At a deeper level, *personality differences* and *gender differences* frequently influence marital conflict. Differences such as neatness, punctuality, self-discipline, ambition, energy levels, dominance, jealousy, lack of generosity, the need for excitement or relaxation, negativity or a lack of assertiveness, are part of the wide range of differences that can easily become wonderful grist for the mill of discontent, irritation and disputation.

Research finds that husbands tend to withdraw from conflict because of the unpleasantness of their physiological arousal during arguments, whereas wives tend to raise the intensity and escalate the conflict when they sense their husband's non-responsiveness and avoidant behaviour. Men tend to be "too rational" and downplay emotions during conflict whereas women are more likely to complain and criticise (Gottman, 1994, pp. 149-153). Because men and women tend to have very different ways of experiencing and expressing emotion, this too can create a lot of misunderstanding and disagreement within marriage (Gottman, 1999b, p. 307).

Differences in family history and background are an often unrecognised source of conflict in marriage. The partners bring a variety of attitudes, values and beliefs about money (its importance and how it should be managed), sex (its value and function), religion (its central role in the family), and children (how they should be raised—strict or lenient?) that influence the way they connect and interact with each other as parents and as husband and wife. Even attitudes towards conflict itself, or how to deal with anger and stress, learned in the family as they were growing up, often cause bitter disagreements as the couple becomes frustrated over their mismatched scripts.

Six hidden issues often drive the most destructive arguments. By "hidden" we mean that they are not usually talked about or openly acknowledged (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994, pp. 123-131).

Power. Couples may unconsciously fight over who has control of the relationship. Who has the final say? Power struggles occur to determine the outcome and resolution of concerns. Control issues are least likely to damage the relationship when a couple feels that they are a team and that the needs and desires of each are considered in making decisions.

Feeling loved. Married partners need to feel that they are loved and that their emotional needs are being met. Knowing that they are secure in the relationship and that they are needed and cared for by their partner paves the way for greater connection and more efficient problem solving.

Recognition. When couples receive recognition and appreciation from their partner for their accomplishments, they feel valued for who they are and for what they do. This not

only prevents relationship burnout but provides them with the confidence to deal with issues openly and effectively.

Commitment. It is critical for married partners to feel secure in their relationship. When conflict arises, if an individual feels that their partner may “get up and leave,” then anxiety and uncertainty are aroused that can block the path to conflict resolution.

Integrity. Nothing undermines a couple’s ability to deal with their problems and differences more than the feeling that their partner questions their motives or intentions. When an individual feels that they are invalidated, insulted or that their integrity is questioned, these feelings take precedence over any attempts to resolve specific issues or problems.

Acceptance. All couples need to feel accepted and respected by each other. This issue underlies all other issues. The fear of being rejected or found to be unacceptable sabotages an individual’s desire to pursue serious conflict resolution. Markman sees “acceptance as the most basic hidden issue driving the issues of power, caring, commitment and integrity in arguments (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994, pp. 132).

A Three-Step Model for Managing Conflict

Couples can help reduce distress and prevent the breakdown of their marriage by restraining or eliminating negativity—threatening, blaming and shaming each other or using judgmental language as a way of reacting to and controlling their partner’s behaviour and actions. They can learn how to effectively manage their conflict and resolve their problems in ways that protect their relationship.

Sadly, nobody formally teaches us how to deal with conflict, so we often stumble along with attitudes and behaviours that we learned in childhood as we watched our parents or other adults address disagreements.

Here is a ***three step model*** that will help married partners to connect with each other emotionally, establish a healthy dialogue, and resolve their problems amicably.

Step One: Connect with the emotion. Deal first with the emotional tensions generated by the conflict and connect with the feelings of the other person. Focus primarily on two areas—an acknowledgement of your own feelings and responses, and show a willingness to connect with the emotional reactions of your partner.

Calm yourself. Because being “emotionally flooded” is so destructive to a relationship, the first strategy you need to learn is to recognise when you are feeling overwhelmed; identify what triggers you off; and acknowledge how you get drawn into negative patterns of interaction. Take deliberate steps to calm yourself down:

- Tell yourself to relax as you monitor your physical responses, reduce your arousal level, and deal with your stress reactions so that you can enter into dialogue with your partner.

- Call “time out” so you can recover your composure.
- Talk to yourself, so that you get rid of negative, hurtful or vengeful thoughts and replace them with soothing and validating ones that you rehearse to yourself. (Gottman, 1994, pp. 176 –181).

Listen to your partner non-defensively. Connecting with your partner is crucial to understanding and resolving conflict. Listening empathically enables you to embrace your partner’s feelings and prevents escalation, invalidation and withdrawal from occurring. Training yourself to speak to your partner in a way that does not trigger a negative response will reduce their defensiveness and improve your communication with each other (Gottman, 1994, pp. 181-194).

Validate each other’s feelings. Accepting, appreciating and affirming your partner’s feelings does not necessarily mean you agree with them. It does show that you empathise and understand. Nothing makes a person feel more valued, respected and loved (Gottman, 1994, pp. 195-199).

Step Two: Discuss the problem. Seek to understand your partner’s concern about a specific issue. Here are a few attitudes and actions that are critical in the process of discussing the problem:

Make a “soft” start to the discussion. Research shows that couples in a happy, stable marriage are extremely careful about the way they begin their conflict discussions. “Softened start-ups” help minimise their partner’s defensiveness (Gottman, 1999b, pp. 224, 225). Pay close attention to your own inner dialogue, managing your negative thoughts and the desire to respond defensively. Focus on raising issues only with friendship, sympathy and an understanding of your partner’s situation in their mind.

Clearly define what the problem is that needs to be resolved. Be specific and make sure that you both understand what the nature of the problem is and how you both see the issue. Focus on one issue at a time. Do not complicate the issue by trying to discuss several different or related issues at the same time.

Discuss and validate your points of view. State the problem but do not try to solve it yet. Be sure you both understand and validate each other’s point of view. Do not generalise about the problem, be specific and avoid using absolutes like “you always” or “you never”. Avoid personally labelling each other and seek to eliminate all hidden agendas and the use of camouflaged messages.

The Speaker-Listener Technique. If discussing the problem with each other is really difficult or explosive, one or both of you may call “time out”. This is not to avoid the issue but to allow time for you to calm down (return to step one) and refocus on the substantive issues involved in the conflict. When you are ready to recommence discussions, you might wish to, with respect and safety, utilise the very effective and proven method of communicating with each other called the “Speaker/Listener technique” developed by Markman, Stanley and Blumberg in their book *Fighting for Your Marriage* (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994, pp. 63, 64). This technique can operate

as a “circuit breaker” by preventing the four destructive patterns of communication from emerging. It operates according to the following rules:

Rules for couples

- The one speaking “has the floor” and therefore the right to speak without interruption;
- The “floor” is shared over the course of the discussion as the couple switch roles;
- No problem solving is allowed. Just a good discussion of your thoughts and feelings.

Rules for the speaker

- Speak for yourself. Don’t try to be a mind reader. Talk about your thoughts, feelings and concerns. Try to use “I” statements
- Don’t go on and on. Confine what you say to brief manageable statements. No long monologues;
- Stop and let the listener paraphrase.

Rules for the listener

- Paraphrase and playback what you heard.
- Focus on the Speaker’s message. Affirm what they said. Don't try to rebut their argument.

Step Three: Solve problems. Nothing will be resolved unless you feel positive towards one and another and are invested in each other’s good. Having listened to and thoroughly understood each other’s point of view, you must be willing to give and take; be responsive to each other’s influence; and recognise that neither of you can have their own way all the time. Furthermore, you must be prepared to mutually co-operate in bringing about changes where these are important to the relationship. Such a collaborative problem solving process involves (Callan & Noller, 1987, p. 154).

Look at alternative solutions. Consider all options and alternatives open to you to resolve the problem. Brainstorm as many ideas as possible without criticism or evaluation.

Choose the best solution. Explore the consequences of each of the proposed alternatives. Endeavour to be flexible to ensure that both of your needs are met. This kind of creative solution (different from your original demands, yet satisfying to both) is superior to the alternatives—*capitulation* (giving your partner what they want), *compromise* (accepting a solution that goes part way towards each other’s view), co-existence (agreeing to accept your current differences).

Plan and implement. Having chosen a solution, now work out an action plan and decide who will be responsible for doing what, where and when. Then, act on the plan.

Evaluate the outcome and the process. Finally, you need to monitor the effect of your decision, checking with each other about the process, what you wish you'd done differently, and how effective the outcome was. Set a time frame for revisiting the solution and evaluating it.

The value of this simple three step problem solving process is that it communicates to the partners an important mutually-affirming message about how much the relationship is valued. Their partner's needs are important enough for them to listen and understand and they are willing to risk new pathways in their search of ideas that will improve their marriage.

Common Mistakes in Conflict Resolution

- **Failure to listen to and deal with the feelings and emotions.**
- **Failure to clearly define the problem.** Partners must listen long enough to understand what the other is saying and clearly understand their concerns.
- **Failure to get all the information.** The solution stage cannot be hurried. Couples need to adequately understand and define the problem. Until they have all the facts, they are not ready to look for a solution. Some simply lack the motivation to resolve their differences, either because they don't care anymore about the relationship or they find it all too hard. They would sooner resolve the situation by being submissive or avoiding the conflict all together.
- **Failure to communicate effectively** can also create a huge barrier to conflict resolution. People who make the mistake of being critical, dogmatic or defensive and use a range of "power plays" to block the successful resolution of conflict, actively prevent their partner from feeling understood and appreciated within the marriage relationship.

Marriage brings together two people in a special relationship. Each marriage has its unique combination of styles for handling conflict. As indicated earlier, marriage partners tend to learn their mode of conflict management in their childhood years as they are growing up in their family of origin, where they observe, copy and react to the styles of their parents. As a result, couples can sometimes find themselves gridlocked in conflict, using two learned styles that don't work well together. This can be frustrating and confusing especially if they both believe innately that their way is right and that it is the only way to manage the conflict and achieve resolution, peace and harmony.

Couple Exercise: *Conflict Analysis*

Invite couples to use the response sheet *Conflict Analysis* to identify an area of concern that produces conflict in their current relationship. Using the *3 Step Model for Managing Conflict*, encourage couples to work through their issue toward resolution.

Alternatively, the couple may wish to take one of the issues of concern identified in Session 1 as a problem requiring resolution. The couple will use the *3 Step Model for Managing Conflict* to work toward resolving the problem.

Allow couples sufficient time to work together on this exercise so that they can achieve significant gains (approx: 20 -30 minutes).

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Most couples have disagreements and conflicts in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Usually Agree	No Contest	Usually Disagree	Always Disagree	
1. Handling family finances		1	2	3	4	5
2. Matters of recreation		1	2	3	4	5
3. Religious matters		1	2	3	4	5
4. Demonstrations of affection		1	2	3	4	5
5. Friends		1	2	3	4	5
6. Sex relations		1	2	3	4	5
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behaviour)		1	2	3	4	5
8. Philosophy of life		1	2	3	4	5
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws		1	2	3	4	5
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important		1	2	3	4	5
11. Amount of time spent together		1	2	3	4	5
12. Making major decisions		1	2	3	4	5
13. Household tasks		1	2	3	4	5
14. Leisure time interests and activities		1	2	3	4	5
15. Career decisions		1	2	3	4	5
16. Praying and Bible study together		1	2	3	4	5
17. Child-rearing procedures		1	2	3	4	5
18. Where we live		1	2	3	4	5

19. The following line represents different degrees of satisfaction in how you presently resolve conflicts. Please circle the number which best describes how you feel (all things considered) about the level of conflict resolution in your relationship.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Extremely Unsatisfied</i>	<i>Fairly Unsatisfied</i>	<i>A little Satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	<i>Extremely</i>	<i>Perfect</i>

Adapted from Graham Spanier, "Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scales for Assessing the Quality of Marriage and Similar Dyads", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, February 1976. Used by permission.

3 STEP MODEL FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

1. Connect with the Emotion

- a. Calm yourself
- b. Listen non-defensively
- c. Validate each other's feelings

2. Discuss the Problem

- a. Make a "soft" start to the discussion
- b. Clearly define the problem that needs to be resolved
- c. Discuss and validate your points of view

3. Solve the Problem

- a. Look at alternative solutions
- c. Choose the best solution
- c. Develop your action plan
- d. Implement the plan
- e. Evaluate the outcome, and the process used to get to resolution

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Raising Heavenly Children on Earth

By Willie and Elaine Oliver



Introduction

Raising children in today's society is more challenging than ever. Shaping a child's character is even more urgent as children are confronted daily with values that are hostile to Godly values. Children today are bombarded with mixed messages through the media, internet, other adults, and their peers. These confusing messages have set them on a path becoming desensitized to violence, immorality, abuse, discrimination, and other societal ills.

Slide 1



Introduction

Raising children in today's society is more challenging than ever. Shaping a child's character is even more urgent as children are confronted daily with values that are hostile to Godly values. Children today are bombarded with mixed messages through the media, internet, other adults, and their peers. These confusing messages have set them on a path becoming desensitized to violence, immorality, abuse, discrimination, and other societal ills.

The statistics on teen homicide, bullying in schools, school shootings, suicides, drug abuse reflect a sea change in the nature of childhood—making it much harder for children to learn basic lessons of self-management, self-esteem, and empathy towards others. Children today are more prone to depression, anxiety, and impulsive behavior. At the same time, there are more economic pressures on parents so parents have to work harder and longer leaving them less time to spend with their children.

In spite of these challenges, parents are still the best protection (protective factor) against children engaging in at-risk behaviors such as drug use, premarital sex, and eating disorders. Parents must take an active role in facilitating the character, social and emotional development of their children. While parenting is not an exact science and there are no guarantees, parents who make the most of the time with their children will be able to instill in their children Christian values which will prepare them not only for life on this earth but for life after this earth.

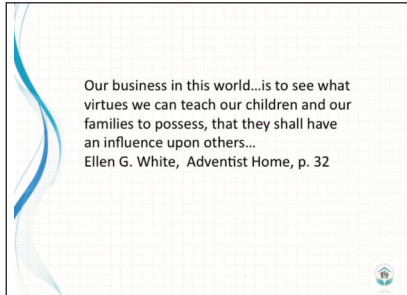
Slide 2



There are times when our parenting seems like an insignificant task especially when one is changing diapers, wiping up spills, arguing about curfews and dirty rooms. This text is a wonderful reminder that children are, indeed,

a gift from the Lord. It is amazing to think that God would trust humans enough to raise His heavenly children on this earth!

Slide 3

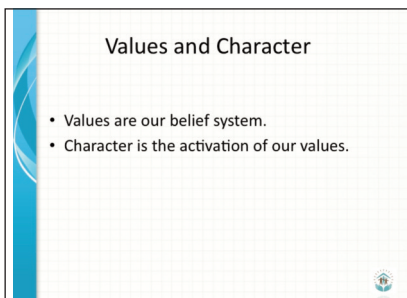


Parenting should be approached as sacred work. (Prather, H. & Prather, G. *Spiritual Parenting*, 1996).

Parenting is one of the most important and challenging tasks God has given to humanity. Consider the eternal significance of raising a child who is not just obedient and compliant but a child who will grow into a mature character, have a healthy self-esteem, manage their emotions and have healthy relationships with others.

Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect parent and by God's grace our children can grow up to be fine adults having had parents who are less than perfect. On the same note, parents should not expect their children to be perfect. They will make mistakes, experience failures, and exhibit human idiosyncrasies. Parents who create an environment of humility and grace will reap positive benefits in their relationship with their children and see these results in how their children relate to and influence others.

Slide 4



Let's begin with a working definition of values and character.

Values are our belief system.

BusinessDictionary.com defines values as:

Important and enduring beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or desirable and what is not. Values exert major influence on the behavior of an individual and serves as broad guidelines in all situations.

Some fundamental moral values are honesty, integrity, respect, responsibility for others. These basic values are outlined clearly as the fruit of the Spirit in the Bible.

Read Galatians 5:22-23

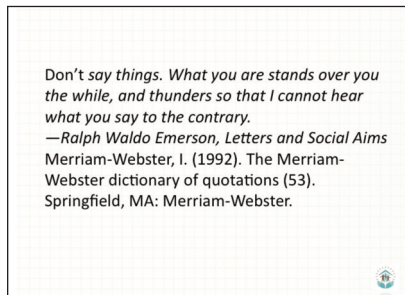
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (NASB)

Character is the activation of our values.

Character is not what we say—it is who we are. It is how we live out our values; an expression of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians.

Character is made up of foundational values mentioned previously. When these qualities are part of a person's character, one can expect them to be exhibited relatively persistently and consistently in the person's behavior. One would not expect them to change as the person interacts with different people or in different situations.

Slide 5



Read Quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson (American Poet and Writer)

“Don't say things. What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims* (Merriam-Webster, I. (1992). The Merriam-Webster dictionary of quotations (53). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.)

From a Christian perspective the standard for character is set by Christ Himself. Christ outlined the standard for character development in the Sermon on the Mount, a sermon that is not just filled with nice words but one which tells us how to be as Christians. It is not passive— it is active.

As Christians our understanding of character development needs to be set within of the context of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is that Christ's perfection of character

stands for all of us. Character development on our part can add nothing to the abundant salvation which is ours in Christ. Such grace is truly amazing!

Our desire to “be good” and to raise “good” children, then, must not be misunderstood as in any way contributing to our salvation. It is only our *response* to grace. Thus, for the Christian, the goal toward which we stretch in the development of Christian character is to reflect Jesus’ manner in the way we relate to others.

Character is observable in an person’s behavior. In this sense “character” can be differentiated from “values.” Remember, values are our beliefs; it is more philosophical. Character is active.

Note to presenter: The goal of this activity is to get participants thinking about their goals for their children and how they want to go about building certain qualities, beliefs, values, perceptions, and skills into their children’s lives.

Activity:

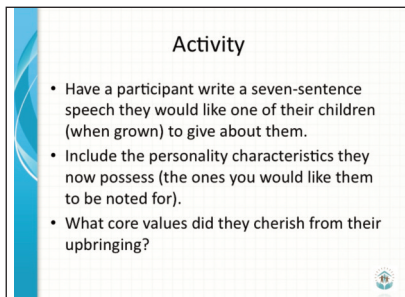
--Have a participant write a seven-sentence speech they would like one of their children (when grown) to give about them.

--Include the personality characteristics they now possess (the ones you would like them to be noted for)

--What core values did they cherish from their upbringing?

Select 3 or 4 participants to share their speeches with the whole group.

Slide 6



The slide is titled "Activity" and contains three bullet points. It has a light blue background with a grid pattern and a decorative blue wave on the left side. A small logo is in the bottom right corner.

Activity

- Have a participant write a seven-sentence speech they would like one of their children (when grown) to give about them.
- Include the personality characteristics they now possess (the ones you would like them to be noted for).
- What core values did they cherish from their upbringing?

Slide 7

Some Qualities We Want to See in Our Children

- Fair
- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Forgiving
- Empathy and caring for others
- Respectful of others' rights
- Respectful of legitimate authority
- Responsible for their own behavior
- Capable of generosity and love



Some Qualities We Want to See in Our Children

Fair

Honest

Trustworthy

Forgiving

Respectful of others' rights

Respectful of legitimate authority


Responsible for their own behavior

Capable of generosity and love

Slide 8

Emotional Intelligence: What is it?

- Emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) is one's ability to control their emotions.
- It is being emotionally aware and having the ability to manage your emotions even in stressful situations.
- Researchers have found that EQ is more predictive of one's success in life than IQ.
- EQ leads to happiness in all areas of life, including family relationships.



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Slide 9

Emotional Intelligence: Why is it important?

- Character development is not intrinsic unless one is emotionally aware.
- The ability to handle one's emotions under all circumstances is the true test of one's character.
- Helping children to manage their emotions is key to them becoming responsible and caring adults.



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--The ability to handle one's emotions under all circumstances is the true test of one's character.


--Helping children to manage their emotions is key to them becoming responsible and caring adults.

“Family Life is our first school for emotional learning,” writes psychologist Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam, 1995, pp. 189-90). “in this intimate cauldron we learn how to feel about ourselves and how others will react to our feelings; how to think about these feelings and what choices we have in reacting; how to read and express hopes and fears. This

Slide 10

Parents as Emotion Coaches

- Become aware of the child's emotion.
- Recognize the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching.
- Listen empathetically, validating the child's feelings.
- Help the child find words to label the emotion he or she is having.
- Set limits while exploring strategies to solve the problem at hand.



emotional schooling operates not just through the things parents say and do directly to children, but also in the models they offer for handling their own feelings and those that pass between husband and wife. Some parents are gifted emotional teachers, other atrocious.”

Dr. John Gottman, a leading psychologist, who has done extensive research in marriage and parenting, suggests that parents need to become involved with their children's feelings. Parents must become emotion coaches. Parents should use negative and positive emotions as opportunities to teach their children important lessons about life and build a closer relationship with them. Dr. Gottman is clear that emotion coaching does not mean that parents should do away with discipline but helps parents have more successful parent-child interactions. (Gottman, J., *Raising An Emotionally Intelligent Child*, 1997, New York).

Parents as Emotion Coaches

There are five steps parents need to follow in emotion coaching:

---Become aware of the child's emotion.

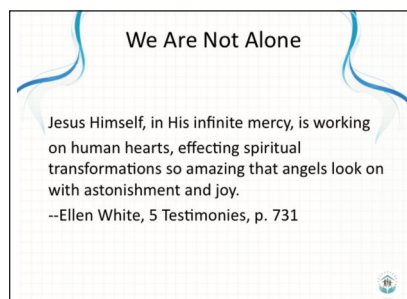
--Recognize the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching.

--Listen empathetically, validating the child's feeling. In his research Dr. Gottman found that parents' attitudes are essential in raising children who will be emotionally intelligent and responsible adults. Parents should make sure their language is not evaluative, judgmental, blaming, or critical. (Gottman, J. Article: *Fostering Emotionally Intelligent Children, Families, and Communities*), 2011, Gottman Institute.)

--Help the child find words to label the emotion he or she is having.

--Set limits while exploring strategies to solve the problem at hand. Children need parents to set clear limits that are age appropriate. They rely on this guidance in both childhood and adolescence. Children begin asking for independence from very early on, however, the parent who gives independence without limits is not doing the child a favor. Rather, this creates havoc and insecurity for the child. Control without independence, on the other hand, is also a hindrance to development. Children must be respected as persons with a point of view and given opportunities to make choices.

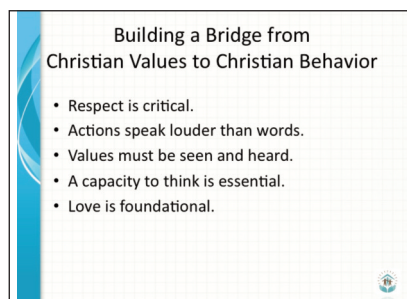
Slide 11



Our ultimate goal in parenting is for our children to become mature adults who reflect Christ's manner in their relationships with others and the values of His kingdom when making decisions for their lives.

Here's the good news—it's NEVER too late to start and we are not in this alone

Slide 12



Building a Bridge from Christian Values to Christian Behavior

Knowing about values, character, and emotional intelligence is one thing but how do parents help children move from thinking to doing? How do we help our children turn nouns such as generosity, kindness, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, forgiveness, compassion into action verbs? Children do not acquire what Robert Coles (1997) calls "moral intelligence" or what Goleman calls "emotional intelligence" by memorization of rules and regulations. A list of good qualities and virtues will be as quickly forgotten as they are memorized, but practice in actual situations, created scenarios or imagined plots set the stage for action. As values are internalized, being "good" becomes a part of our children's identity. Their commitment to Christian values moves beyond mere belief and talk; it is acted upon.

Hear this testimony from a thirteen-year old boy:

If you just try to remember to be polite, and help someone, if you can; if you try to be friendly to folks, and not be a wise guy . . . then you are off to a start, because it's on your mind (you see?), it's on your mind that you should be out there doing something about it, what you believe is right, is good, and not just talking about it (Coles, 1997, p. 17).

If we are going to facilitate the development of our children's characters, there are several important truisms we must understand and implement in our relationships with them (Lickona, 1983):

Morality is respect. Respect is at the core of morality—respect for ourselves, for others and for God. We must respect children and expect respect in return. If we want to raise moral children, we must treat them as persons. A pastor was jarred into this realization when a church member touched his shoulder as he was taking a step backward and said, "Careful, there's a person behind you." Turning to excuse himself to another adult, he was surprised instead to see a two-year-old struggling to stay on his feet. Indeed, a person was behind him, and learning about respect cannot begin too early. Even as we are reminded to treat even the smallest child with respect, so they must learn to have respect for us as parents. Respect is a two-way street; it's give and take. It is living by the Golden Rule in all our relationships—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (cf. Luke 6:31).

Actions speak louder than words. Children take stock of everything we do, they observe, file away, and later imitate how we adults live, what we do and how we treat those around us. Modeling is a very effective

teacher. But remember, modeling isn't about perfection. It is about letting our children see our commitment to Christian ideals. It is also about modeling what Christians do when they have made a mistake. It's saying you are sorry. It's talking to kids about your struggles to live the way you believe. It's about turning together to the Savior you all need.

Values must be both seen and heard. As the old saying puts it, "We must not only practice what we preach, but preach what we practice." Children need our words as well as our actions. For maximum impact, they must not only be taught the values, but they need to know the reasons and beliefs which lie behind them. Parents need to guide, instruct, listen and advise. In the *Valuegenesis Study* of 12,000 Seventh-day Adventist young people, one of the best predictors of high levels of faith development in youth was parents who talked openly about their faith.

A capacity to think is vital. Parents need to teach their children *to* think, not what to think. One person shares his parents' successful strategy:

Whenever I did something wrong, my parents didn't just demand that I stop my behavior. Instead, they almost always asked, "How would you feel if someone did that to you?" That gave me a chance to reflect on whatever I did and how I'd like to have it done to me.

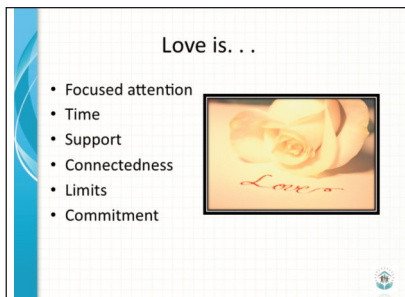
I feel this has helped me throughout my life. Now I always try to stop and ask myself that question before I do something, rather than after the fact. (Lickona, 1983, p. 24)

There are two very important lessons here: first, take the time to think; second, put yourself in the other person's shoes. Neither of these things come naturally to children. They need our encouragement and much practice. Situations present themselves every day—in family living, in the newspaper, on

the television, etc.—which can be turned into opportunities to engage our children’s thinking. Even when real situations do not present themselves, we can pose scenarios to help children exercise and sharpen their moral reasoning.

Love is foundational. Love is the foundation on which parents build. The Scripture says, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). It is His love that we reflect to our children. Children need to be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17), the kind of love that God bestows upon us—unconditional love. The kind of love that doesn’t require anything in return. This kind of love helps our children develop a positive self-concept, a sense of worth, an inner strength.

Slide 13



Love is . . .

- Focused attention
- Time
- Support
- Connectedness
- Limits
- Commitment

Love bonds us to each other and it connects us to God. Being loved helps us to love ourselves. The biblical command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) recognizes that we must first understand our own value as persons before we can value or love someone else. Children (or adults) who do not feel loved have much difficulty opening up to or loving others.

Love can be spelled in many ways.

It is spelled **f-o-c-u-s-e-d a-t-t-e-n-t-i-o-n**. Children need to know they are being heard and that they are important enough for you to devote your full attention to what they have to say.

It is spelled **t-i-m-e**. There are no shortcuts, even for busy parents. No “quality” of time makes up for minimal “quantity.” Strong families structure their schedules, however busy and hectic, to spend time together eating, working, and playing. The bottom line—parenting takes time.

It is spelled **s-u-p-p-o-r-t**. Growing is about taking risks. Taking risks is scary. Fortunate is the child whose parents foster an I-can-do-it attitude and encourage children to try new things, who celebrate successes and reframe “failures” as simply “tries which teach us what doesn’t work.” Fortunate also, is the child who receives much more praise and appreciation than criticism and complaint. Such parents help their children to develop a sense of themselves as “good” and competent persons who can stand up for what is right and who don’t need the approval of the group at any price.

It is spelled **c-o-n-n-e-c-t-e-d-n-e-s-s**. The latest research indicates that the young people most likely to be involved in high-risk behaviors (drugs, alcohol, premarital sex, fast driving, etc.) are the ones who feel disconnected. On the other hand, those who experience strong connectedness with family, church, school and community are least vulnerable to such behavior.

It is spelled **l-i-m-i-t-s**. Love and limits go together. A review of 500 studies of parenting styles isolated these two factors as the most significant predictors of the kind of parenting that produces children most likely to buy into their parents values and most likely to have the capacity to establish warm, positive relationships with others.

It is also spelled **c-o-m-m-i-t-m-e-n-t**. Ultimately, children need most of all to know there is nothing they can ever say or do or be that moves them out of the circle of your love.

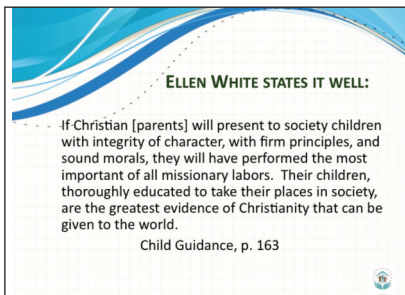
Slide 14



Appreciating the Gift

Parents cannot take away all of the storms and stresses of their children's passage to adulthood. There will be growing pains for parents as well as children. However, when parents set the foundation for positive and healthy development in their children's lives, then children will have the best chance of becoming the persons God intends them to be. They will be able to choose right when they are faced with tough decisions; they will not be easily swayed by other's opinions; and their relationships will have the best chance of flourishing. They will find that not only does a strong character coupled with emotional intelligence benefit them personally, but they will be a benefit to the family, church and society as a whole because they have been given the essential building blocks for life.

Slide 15



Notes to presenter:

End with a prayer asking God to provide parents with wisdom, emotional intelligence, and unconditional love.

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Willie and Elaine Oliver are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters.



Win! Wellness

By John and Millie Youngberg



WIN! Wellness: Homes of Hope & Health
Integrated Balanced Living

Note to the Presenter:

This seminar is designed to introduce pastors, ministry leaders, and church members to the WIN! Wellness program.

This program is a wonderful compliment to the Family to Family evangelism strategy discussed in the Planbook (2013).

Slide 1



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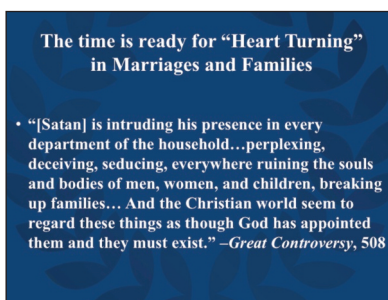
Slide 2



Go Ye into all The World With Family & Health Evangelism

The Elijah Message is the Last Day Message: "And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers . . ." Malachi 4:6

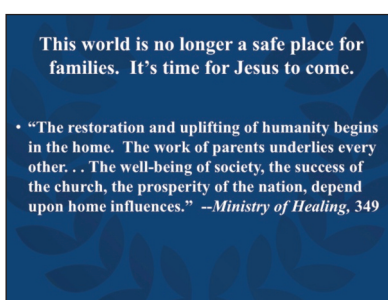
Slide 3



The time is ready for "Heart Turning" in Marriages and Families

"[Satan] is intruding his presence in every department of the household . . . perplexing, deceiving, seducing, everywhere ruining the souls and bodies of men, women, and children, breaking up families . . . And the Christian world seem to regard these things as though God has appointed them and they must exist." —White, E. G., 1888, p. 508.

Slide 4



This world is no longer a safe place for families. It's time for Jesus to come.

"The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. The work of parents underlies every other. . . The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." —White, E. G., 1942, p. 349

Slide 5

Jesus is coming. It's time for TOTAL restoration of broken families.

- We have come to the “times of restoration of all things.” (Acts 3:21).
- Tell me what sin has taken away, and I will tell you what Jesus is ready to restore.

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Slide 6

Family healing affects physical healing.

- Relationships in families affect physical, emotional health in a positive or negative way.
- Jesus is coming and families need to prepare:
 - Physically, mentally, spiritually, and relationally.
- Jesus came to heal the broken hearted and set the captives free (Isaiah 61:1).

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Slide 7

Jesus is coming. Is your family getting ready?

- In Ezekiel's time the temptation that Satan put before families was: “We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries.” —Eze. 20:32.
- Today the temptation of many families who profess to be God's children is:
 - To watch the same television like others
 - To visit the same internet sites as others
 - To eat the same food as others
- But God is calling His children to “come out ... and be separate.” (2 Cor. 6:17) since they are heading for a different homeland.

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Slide 8

Jesus is coming. We need healthy families and a balanced lifestyle.

- We need to know health principles so as to prevent sickness in our families and in families of others.
- The purpose of the Three Angels' Messages is to prepare a people who will reflect the image of God physically, mentally, spiritually and relationally. They will stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion "having His Father's name written on their foreheads." "They are without fault before the throne of God" Rev. 14: 1,5.

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Slide 9

Jesus is coming. Our children have a great work to do in the last days.

- "When heavenly intelligences see that men are no longer permitted to present the truth, the Spirit of God will come upon the children, and they will do a work in the proclamation of the truth which the older workers cannot do because their way will be hedged up."
- They "will be endued with the Spirit of God."
- They will be enlisted "in the army of workers to help the sick and suffering."
- They will "take part in the medical missionary work." —Adventist Home, 489

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Slide 10

What did the given statements say to you? Do you believe that Jesus is coming?

Reflect and Discuss—10 minutes

- 1 The Elijah Message
- 2 Satan Intruding in Families and Marriages
- 3 Restoration and uplifting of families
- 4 God is calling His children to come out from worldly influences
- 5 Prepare teens and children to do medical missionary work just before Jesus comes when the work will be hedged up for adults

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Slide 11

Jesus is coming. We and our families must be ready and help others to be ready for this glorious event!

- What can we do to prepare others for Jesus to come?
- Consider doing the Family and Medical Missionary work which is an entering wedge to the gospel message.
- Do you have a desire to help others to know Jesus?

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Slide 12

John and Millie Youngberg have studied the same quotes as you have read.




They were impressed by God to help others to do Family and Medical Missionary work by preparing and equipping those who desire to serve the Lord with ready-to-use materials.

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Slide 13




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Slide 14

WIN! Wellness Homes of Hope & Health:

- Is family and medical evangelism prepared for small groups and seminars.
- Is designed to equip others to fulfill the gospel commission.
- Blends family, physical, mental-spiritual wellness




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Slide 15

WIN! Wellness Homes of Hope & Health:

- Helps prevent illness and degenerative disease
- Is an easy-to-use research based wellness program for church and non-church members
- Gently presents doctrines




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Slide 16

WIN! Wellness Homes of Hope & Health:

- Is a tool that Divisions, Unions, Conferences, Missions, and local churches can readily use.
- It is simple to use
- Anyone who can read can use it.




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Slide 17

WIN! Wellness Homes of Hope & Health:

- It is a *Ministry of Healing Model* which includes the family
- In *Ministry of Healing* there are 7 chapters that are on the family
- Family and health go together



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Slide 18

WIN! Wellness Integrated Balanced Living



Unlocking the Genes of Health and Healing


WIN! Wellness *Integrated Balanced Living*

Unlocking the Genes of Health and Healing

Slide 19

WIN! Wellness Homes of Hope & Health Instructional Material

- Many people die because of lack of knowledge or because health laws are not followed.
- WIN! Wellness is about helping people to LIVE— Live longer, healthier, happier and holier.




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Slide 20

WIN! Wellness *Homes of Hope & Health* Instructional Material

- The WIN! Wellness 3 books and DVDs can save lives—maybe yours!
- And save lives for eternity
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WIN! Wellness *Homes of Hope & Health* Instructional Material

- A series of 3 new books in Chinese and English for small group ministry are for solo, couple, family or small group learning.
- A Digipack of 3 DVDs with hundreds of outstanding PowerPoints for seminars, professional presentations, and evangelistic meetings is available.




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Slide 22

WIN! Wellness *Homes of Hope & Health* Instructional Material

- You are the Presenter of *Homes of Hope & Health*
- The non-audio DVDs have 29 full scripts and all you need for your ministry.
- It is designed to equip any one who has a passion to do family and medical evangelism.



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Slide 23

The Harvest is ripe and waiting

- “Pray therefore the Lord of the Harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.”
- God needs people like you to do this ministry—to prepare others for the coming of Jesus.




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Slide 24

Training of Trainers for Homes of Hope and Health Ministry

- John and Millie claimed the promise given to Abraham,
- I will bless you and you will be a blessing to the nations.




Training of Trainers for *Homes of Hope and Health Ministry*

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Slide 25

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- Large metropolitan cities, little villages, small towns world wide are waiting to hear the good news of salvation.
- Lifestyle changes need to be improved in preparation for last day events.




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Slide 26

Training of Trainers for Homes of Hope & Health Ministry is being conducted in many countries.

- Who will do this needed family and health ministry? You? Your church?



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Slide 27

Training of Trainers in China and the Far East

- In April-June 2012 379 instructor-trainers were certified in the Far East:
 - 292 -mainland China
 - 50 in Singapore delegates from 7 countries
 - 37 in Taiwan




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Slide 28

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- Large metropolitan cities, little villages, small towns world wide are waiting to hear the good news of salvation.
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Training of Trainers in China and the Far East

The Southern Asia-Pacific Division is translating *Homes of Hope & Health* into 16 languages as a basis of a major evangelistic thrust in 2013.

Slide 29

Training of Trainers

- The WIN! Wellness *Homes of Hope & Health* team can't do this immense job alone.
- Helpers are needed to touch the world for Jesus
- You are needed now!
- Later it may be too late.



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Slide 30

Training of Trainers

- Training Sessions are available for divisions and conferences.
- They include:
 - Getting acquainted with the content by hearing presentations, getting involved in small discussion groups and leadership training.



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Slide 31

Philippines



- Training of trainers includes participating in marriage commitment activities.

Philippines

Training of trainers includes participating in marriage commitment activities.

Slide 32

Singapore

Couples share their love story



Singapore

Couples share their love story

Slide 33



Couples knee-to-knee activity
“Let’s Talk About Us.” Philippines

Slide 34



Marriage Recommitment Vows
Philippines

Slide 35



Mexico
Sharing Recommitment Vows

Slide 36



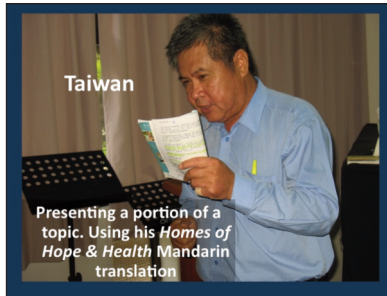
Michigan USA
Affirmation of love with a rose at an Agape banquet.

Slide 37



China
Participating in small group activities

Slide 38



Taiwan

Presenting a portion of a topic. Using his *Homes of Hope & Health* Mandarin translation

Slide 39



- For purchasing WIN! Wellness *Homes of Hope & Health* books and the Digi-pack with three non-audio DVDs. Go to the WIN! Wellness website.

- For full scripts and PowerPoint's

Slide 40



Teach others to — Have a Home of Hope & Health and make a difference in your community!



Slide 41 For more information on WIN Wellness:

Homes of Hope & Health Integrated Balanced Living

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Homes of Hope & Health

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John B. Youngberg, Ed. D., and Millie Youngberg, Ed. D., are the founders of Homes of Hope & Health Integrated Balanced Living and authors of WIN! Wellness.

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Sharing the Good News

By Clair Sanches

(Materials needed: 128 chocolate coins or sweets, 1 paper bag -not see through, and a Bible (older children may be asked to read Bible texts)).

When Jesus was on earth he had some very special friends. We call them disciples. These friends were always with Jesus. Listening and learning from Him. After Jesus died and came back to life he gave these special friends a job to do. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said to them: "So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." That is something we believe in as Seventh-day Adventists. We believe that we should spread the love of Jesus to all people we meet.

It is not always easy to tell others about Jesus. Sometimes they don't want to listen or we feel that it might not be the right time to say something. We might get worried because we want to fit in with our friends who don't believe in Jesus. We might be shy. Whatever the reason there is no reason to worry. In Matthew 28:20 we see that we are not alone and don't have to be afraid. "Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, **and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age.**"

Put all the 128 chocolate coins in the bag. Read the assignment which Jesus gave to us in Romans 10:14, 15. "But before people can ask the Lord for help, they must believe in him; and before they can believe in him, they must hear about him; and for them to hear about the Lord, someone must tell them; and before someone can go and tell them, that person must be sent. It is written, "How beautiful is the person who comes to bring good news"

Take one chocolate coin. This coin represents the first child who came to Sabbath School. After church this child told a friend about the Good News of Jesus and asked them to come to church. Take another coin out of the bag. Now there are 2 children in the Sabbath School. After church both of these children told a friend about the Good News of Jesus and asked them to come to church.

Take out another 2 coins from the bag. Now there are 4 children in the Sabbath School. After church all four of these children told a friend about the Good News of Jesus and asked them to come to church.

Take 4 coins out of the bag. Now there are 8 children in the Sabbath School. After church all eight of these children told another friend about the Good News of Jesus and asked them to come to church.

Take 8, 16, 32, 64 and repeat the story. At 64 empty the bag. Show them that in 8 weeks' time you can go from 1 to 128 children in Sabbath School. Give each child 2 coins. One for themselves and one for a friend.

So remember the words of Jesus: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Close with a word of prayer.

References

The 128 chocolate coins presentation is adapted from: www.kidsundayschool.com .

Clair Sanches is Director of the Department of Family Ministries for the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists.



Just Like ME!

By Kylie Ward

Note to Story Teller:

I remember hearing this story in church about 18 years ago – I don't know where it came from but I took it and told it and told it and always received a positive response. Along the path it has changed and grown into the story it is today. The point of the story is simple, it's about reaching out of ourselves and our circumstances and walking in other peoples shoes and connecting with them.

This story can be read as written; however, it is at its best when acted out with all the directions and voices. The story works well with loud and wild gestures, acting out the characters, showing the tantrums, and raising your voice. When finally, the lesson is learned, lower your voice in recognition of the humility to change. You can do all four characters from one story teller or you could act the story out and have four characters playing each of the parts and include a narrator. How about going wild and dressing up as each of the animals? Or even simply using a mask? This story is funny, dramatic and exciting, but the point of the story is clear, we need to reach out to others who aren't like us, or aren't in our family—when we do we are blessed. I have included questions at the end so that the story teller can allow the stories message to unfold.

Once there was a Queen Bee who was very beautiful. She felt very bored all alone in the bee hive. “Hmm,” she mused. “I want someone to play with, someone who is just like me. Beautiful, intelligent, and lovely,” she said as she admired her reflection in the window and she yelled for her battered and broken, but faithful Servant Bee. “Yes, master,” the Servant Bee hobbled in, wiping his runny nose and snorting as he came “Go and find someone for me to play with who is just like me. Beautiful, intelligent, and lovely,” she said in a sickly sweet tone. The Servant Bee ran as quickly as his buckled legs could take him.

He went all around, high and wide and near and far, until he found a very interesting creature – it was black with 8 legs. What sort of creature is that? You guessed it– a spider! “Your Majesty,” the Servant Bee slobbered, “I brought you someone to play with that is just like you!” The Queen Bee stared at the creature. She squawked as if she had seen something dreadful. “Take him away and bring me someone to play with that is just like me. Beautiful, intelligent, and lovely,” she said in a voice that wasn’t very pleasant. The Servant Bee wiped his dripping nose and lumbered out. He went high and wide and near and far and backward and forward and found the perfect play mate – this creature was very beautiful, and buzzed with energy. He thought maybe this time he had found just the right friend. “Majesty,” he lisped, “I found someone for you to play with.” He stopped to snort, “Who is beautiful!” The Queen Bee interrupted his speech. “That,” she squealed, is not beautiful. The creature was black with wings that were red with black dots. What sort of creature is that? That’s right! You guessed it – it’s a lady bug.

The Servant Bee could tell that the Queen Bee was very angry; she stormed around with a very stern and angry face. She looked as if she was going to burst, she leaned in close to the Servant Bee, “Someone to play with who is JUST LIKE ME,” she yelled at the top of her lungs “BEAUTIFUL, INTELLIGENT, AND LOVELY. NOW GO!” Servant Bee went up the hills, down the mountains and through the valleys, until he found a creature just like a bee with wings and could fly and was all black. What sort of creature do you think this one is? You guessed it – it’s a FLY. She screamed with all her lungs, “YUCK, YUCK, YUCK! TAKE IT AWAY! TAKE IT AWAY!” Queen Bee was very upset. “I want someone to play with who is just like me. I don’t want to play with anyone who isn’t as beautiful and intelligent and lovely as ME,” she grumbled to herself.

She paced backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards and backwards, until she ran out of grumble. She sat staring and feeling very lonely with no one to play with. She heard a noise coming from the room next door. She listened and she heard laughing and teasing and singing and games. She pressed her ear to the door and wondered which bees were having so much fun. She opened the door just a little bit and peered through the crack. She was completely shocked! There was the spider, the ladybug, the fly and the Servant Bee all playing together. “How could this be possible?” She wondered. “These creatures are not all from our Bee Family. How could they play together?” she watched quietly. Nobody seemed to mind that Servant Bee couldn’t run very fast, and when he fell over, spider used all his legs to help him up. When they played Tag* spider couldn’t fly, so they all agreed to use only their feet, for this game. Each time they found a plan to include everyone, they always had fun. It took time and thinking because they were different, but they always found a plan and always had fun.

The more Queen Bee watched the more that she could see that something beautiful was happening. Because everyone was different, somehow it made it more fun. She looked down and saw how different she was, she was bigger than the other creatures and a different colour, she wondered if she could play, she hoped she could, she really wanted to. She didn’t think they would play with her as she had been so very mean. But, maybe, she could try “Um, Excuse me, “she said in her calmest and nicest voice. “I’m wondering

if you wouldn't mind," she ummed again and paused, "I was just thinking, would you let me play with you? I know I'm a bit different but I'd really like to play." Servant Bee snorted and snuffled as he always does and wiping his drippy nose said, "Sure, you're IT* Queen Bee," yelled the spider and they all hobbled, crawled and ran in different directions.

Application:

Which creature are you like? How does it feel when others won't play with you? How does it feel to be different? What happens when we all play together? Who do you think reached out in this story? How do you think you can reach out?

God made each of us to be special and unique. We are all precious and beautiful in His sight. God loves us and wants us to love others.

You know, it is fun to play with our families and people who are just like us, but we can have even more fun when we reach out to all sorts of different people in all sorts of different families. Some people have very big families and other families are very small. There are families who have just one adult and some families have many adults. There are big families with lots of kids and families that don't have any kids at all. Even though families are all different, each family can reach out and support, help and play with other families. When we reach out to other families, we will receive a blessing from God.

*Chasey, Dobby, It, Tiggy , Tip, Tick and cat and mouse – use the term that is used in your country. The person who is 'IT' is the person who chases the others and tags them.

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The Missionary Family

By Miriam Andres

In the book of Acts, Dr. Luke gives account about men and women who took seriously Jesus' last recorded words on earth - a supplement to the Great Commission: "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8). The story beautifully portrays this reality.

Pastor Jerry and wife Joanna were visiting families who wanted to be baptized, after attending meetings in the village and learning about Jesus.

"I think this is the house of Brother Peter," Pastor Jerry said. "I saw him seated in that empty chair when I passed-by while jogging yesterday morning."

"Are you sure?" inquired Joanna. Before Pastor Jerry could answer, a chubby guy came out from the house and said. "Please come in. We have been waiting for you. We are all here; my family and three other families who want to meet you."

"My wife Joanna and I are so delighted to see you this morning," Pastor Jerry blurted out excitedly. "We expected to meet one family as listed in this slip. But now you are four families here. Hmnnn. That's interesting. Peter, can you please tell us more about your family and the other families?"

Joanna turned to her husband and said "Honey, before we get any answer, could I speak first, please?" There was chorus of laughter from the group.

"I'm sorry, Honey. Please share your thoughts now."

Joanna started to talk, "well, I just want to express appreciation to the young people and children for joining us. We are happy to see you. These days the younger generation dislikes 'adult' gatherings like this one. And yet you are here. Thank you again." Parents and children smiled and appreciated Joanna's compliment.

Then Peter started to talk. “My wife and my son Tim were baptized two years ago. I am glad I could follow the Lord now. I decided to surrender myself to Jesus and be baptized.”

“I am just curious,” Joanna said kindly, “how did your wife and Tim know the truth? Did they also attend a nightly evangelistic meeting just like what we have now? And why did it take two years for you to discover the Truth?”

Peter responded. “I want to begin by saying there were no nightly meetings for my wife and son. It was actually a “missionary family” that led them to Jesus.”

“What do you mean? Where is the missionary family? Can we talk to them?” Pastor Jerry asked excitedly.

“They live in the next village, where we used to live. But we moved in here because our business tends to be attractive in this area.”

“My son was only six when our SDA neighbor invited him to go to Sabbath School, Peter reminisced. “I call them the “missionary family” because they never get tired bringing people to church. Their eight-year old son plays with Tim so it was easy for me to say yes to the invitation. He was also learning songs and Bible stories and I was happy for that.”

“But I remember I was alarmed one time when Tim asked me why we go to church on Sunday when it was supposed to be Saturday. To me he was just a kid so I didn’t pay attention. I ignored what he said.”

Just then Tim raised his hand and said, “Can I continue the story, Dad? You know that the next portion is my favorite part, don’t you?” Peter nodded and said “Go ahead, my son. Take your time!”

“I cannot forget that Friday morning,” Tim started. “One of the elders of the church where we were members came to invite us to worship. They noticed we had missed several Sunday worship services and other meetings.”

“I responded politely and said, “I am sorry, Brother Sam. Please don’t expect to see us anymore because we are now Seventh-day Adventists.”

“Dad was surprised with what I said,” Tim continued. He was really embarrassed and upset. He apologized to the elder and promised we would attend church on Sunday.”

“When the elder left, my dad turned to me, and said, “Tim, my son, forget about being Seventh-day Adventist. You will never become one. Mark my word!”

“Indeed, that was the beginning of difficult days for Mom and me. Dad did all he could to stop us from being Adventists. There were times when he would wet the clothes Mom prepared for Sabbath or put pork in the food Mom cooked,” recalled Tim.

Tim's mom moved at the center and said "I am excited; could you allow me to talk please?" There was a resounding "yes chorus" from the group.

"The day before we were baptized I saw my husband sharpening the bolo. (A bolo is a large cutting tool of Filipino origin similar to the machete, used particularly in the jungles of Indonesia, the Philippines, and in the sugar fields of Cuba. The primary use for the bolo is clearing vegetation, whether for agriculture or during trail blazing.) He threatened to kill us if we were baptized. I was afraid and confused. Why should our love to God break us apart as a family? I didn't know what to do, but I knew where to go—to the Missionary family."

"My son and I went to their house. Tito Nestor, the missionary father, was on a trip. Only the missionary man, Tita Desy and their son Jack were there. With tears in my eyes I told them about the threat of my husband. Tita Desy didn't say a word for some time. She just embraced me tightly. Then I saw Jack hugging my son who was then sobbing. After some moment of silence, we knelt down in prayer. After the prayer we felt strong and we decided to follow the Lord no matter what happens."

"I never used my bolo," Peter interrupted. When I realized I could not stop my wife and son from being baptized, I began to admire their courage to stand for what they believed."

"After that incident I did not stop my family from going to church, or participating in church activities. But I didn't go with them. I was still embarrassed to let the neighborhood know that I was interested in the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.. Later that year, something happened that changed the course of my life. "

Joann became even more excited and started asking many questions at once. "What was it all about? Was it something frightening? Who was involved?"

"Oh, it was simple," Peter responded. "Let's go back to the missionary neighbor-family. They invited us, along with other families to join a small group called *WIN! Wellness in their home every Sunday afternoon. WIN! Wellness blends the health message with family ministry. Believe me I never missed one session in three months. When we moved to this village my family decided to host a WIN Wellness small group, too. "

Pastor Jerry looked to Peter and said, "Now I understand. The other families here today are part of your small group, am I correct, Peter? You attended the nightly meetings and now you invited us here for you to let us know that you are all ready to be baptized." The group clapped their hands.

Facing the group Joanna politely inquired, "Didn't you say the missionary family lives in the next village?" Everybody said, "Yes."

"You're right, but did you realize your family, Peter, is another 'missionary family'?" said Joanne.

Tim looked up at his mom and dad and a huge smiled lit up his face.

*WIN! **Wellness** consists of 21 Biblically based presentations with PowerPoint slides that combine physical, mental, spiritual, and relations for balanced living. Stories, scientific studies, inspiration, and motivation for lifestyle change are found in each topic

Miriam Andres, PhD, is Director of the Department of Family Ministries for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists.



Second Chances

By Karen M. Flowers

Note to storyteller: This telling of the Bible story “Jonah and the Whale” is illustrated by using balloons filled with helium gas, tied with strings or ribbons approximately 1 ½ meters long. Older children will enjoy controlling the balloons while the story is being told to the younger children.

Create a barrier (i.e. a large table or two turned on their sides) behind which the balloon “puppeteers” can hide. Practice ahead of time is essential so each one knows when to let his or her balloon(s) rise above the table as marked in the script. Remind the puppeteers to hold the string tightly so the balloon will not escape to the ceiling before the climax of the story. One child can control several “waves” or “people of Nineveh” balloons. This story is especially appropriate for a family camp or retreat setting. If used indoors, take into account how you will retrieve the balloons if the ceiling is very high!

If a wide variety of colors of balloons is available, the following color choices are suggested:

God:	gold balloon
Jonah:	red balloon
Ship captain:	silver balloon
Sailors:	2-3 dark blue balloons
Waves:	4-6 balloons, a mixture of light blue and white
People of Nineveh:	4-6 balloons, a mixture of pink and brown
Jesus:	purple balloon
Whale:	gray or black balloon

Once there was a man named Jonah. (All balloons and puppeteers hidden behind barrier, out of sight)
Jonah was God's prophet which means God gave him special jobs to do for Him. (Jonah balloon goes up on string.)

One day God found Jonah and said to him: (God balloon goes up on string.)
"Jonah, I want you to take a message for me to the people living in the big city of Nineveh. I want you to tell them that I want them to change their wicked ways because I love them very much." (People of Nineveh balloons go up on strings.)

But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh. (God and People of Nineveh balloons down.)
First of all, he didn't want to walk all that way across the hot desert sand.

But mostly he didn't want to go because (Jonah balloon bounces up and down with children puppeteers calling out "ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch.")
the things the people of Nineveh did were bad, bad, bad, and Jonah thought God should just send a plague or something to destroy them from the face of the earth. (People of Nineveh balloons up)

So Jonah thought and thought about how (People of Nineveh balloons down.)
he could get out of doing this job for God.

Then he had a bright idea. He would take a trip on a ship in the opposite direction. (Jonah balloon slowly raised and lowered as though in "thought," ending in lowered position.)
By the time God found him, maybe He would decide to send someone else. So (Jonah balloon pops up to full length of string as narrator reads "bright idea.")
Jonah went down to the dock and found just the ship.

"Ahoy, there, Sir!" he called out to the captain. "Got any room for another passenger?"

"Yes, we can take you along," said the captain. "You look okay to me." But what he didn't know was that Jonah was (Captain balloon goes up.)
running away from the God of heaven.

Jonah was very very tired from all his running and he wanted to make sure God (God balloon goes up.)
didn't find him, so he went down into the bottom of the ship where it was dark. It was a good place to hide and to have a good sleep.

While Jonah slept, a violent storm blew up that threatened to destroy the ship. *(Jonah, Captain and God balloons go down.)*

“All hands on deck!” the captain called out to his crew. “Secure the foremast! Keep the ship before the wind! Throw the cargo overboard! Pray to your gods! . . . Hey, where’s that stranger we took onboard? I’m going to wake him up myself. He’d better pray while he bails or we perish! I’ve never seen a storm like this!” *(Wave balloons up, jouncing up and down as though tossed in a storm.)*

“Let’s find out who caused this storm!” the sailors cried out. “Whoever’s name we draw out of the hat, he’s the man!” *(Captain balloon up, followed immediately by sailor balloons up.)*

“Who are you, anyway? And what have we done that made you bring such bad luck upon us?” the sailors asked.

“I am Jonah and I worship the God of heaven who made the sea and the land,” Jonah replied. *(Sailor balloons raise and lower in unison as though agitated.)*

Into the hat went one of the sailor’s hands. Out came the name: JONAH!

“Who are you, anyway? And what have we done that made you bring such bad luck upon us?” the sailors asked. *(Jonah balloon up.)*

“I am Jonah and I worship the God of heaven who made the sea and the land,” Jonah replied. *(Sailor balloon up.)*

The sailors’ faces were filled with fear. “Then what have YOU done?” the sailors wanted to know.

“Just throw me into the sea.” Jonah replied. “I’m the reason for the storm.” *(All Sailor balloons up.)*

So they threw Jonah overboard into the storm. And Jonah would have drowned, except for our God who gives people who make mistakes a second chance. Can you believe it? He sent a whale to rescue his prophet from the storm! And immediately the wind and the rain and the thunder and lightening stopped and the sea was calm! *(Captain, sailor and Jonah balloons down.)*

Safe and sound inside the whale, Jonah thanked God for saving him and promised to do whatever God asked him to do. So God caused the whale to deposit Jonah on dry land so he could be about his business. *(God balloon up.)*

Safe and sound inside the whale, Jonah thanked God for saving him and promised to do whatever God asked him to do. So God caused the whale to deposit Jonah on dry land so he could be about his business. *(Whale balloon up.)*

Safe and sound inside the whale, Jonah thanked God for saving him and promised to do whatever God asked him to do. So God caused the whale to deposit Jonah on dry land so he could be about his business. *(Wave balloons still. God balloon slowly lowered.)*

And God spoke again to Jonah. “I still want you to go to Nineveh,” He said. Jonah thought to himself, “Okay. I’ll go and preach to those Ninevites, but they are so bad they won’t pay any attention and then God will punish them like they deserve.”

(Jonah balloon up)

(Wave and whale balloons down.)

(God balloon up.)

So Jonah preached the good news to the Ninevites that God wanted to give them another chance to love Him and live good lives. Much to his surprise, the Ninevites listened. God was so happy, He sent Jonah right back to tell them how much He had always loved them. He wanted them to know how glad He was they had stopped behaving badly, because their wicked ways could lead to nothing good!

(People of Nineveh balloons up)

(Jesus balloon up.)

(At narration’s end, all balloons released to the ceiling while puppeteers cheer.)

God sent Jesus to bring the same good news to us. No matter what mistakes you have made, this good news is for you. God loves you very much. He wants you to choose the good life He has planned for you. But when you make mistakes, you can always say you’re sorry and God will help you begin again. Yay! A big thanks! A big shout of praise to our “second chance” God! (All balloons and puppeteers hidden behind barrier, out of sight.)

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From Flowers, K. M. (2000) *New Beginnings Family Ministries Planbook*. Silver Spring, MD: Department of Family Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Available from AdventSource: www.adventsource.com. Used by permission



Family to Family: Families Discipling Families to Christ

By Willie and Elaine Oliver with Barna Magyarosi



Slide 1



Discipling Families to Christ

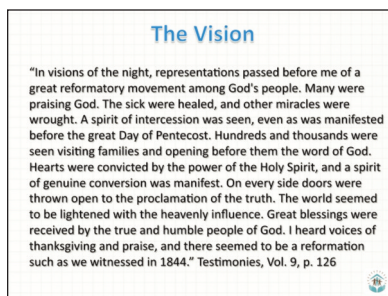
Slide 2



Family to Family: What is it?

- Adventist families getting involved in witnessing.
 - Family center of evangelistic activities in church.
 - Meets needs of various age groups.
 - Uses intercessory prayer.
 - A new lifestyle for all Adventist.
- It is a project that strengthens Adventist families by involving them in witnessing for others.
 - It's aimed at making the family the center of evangelistic activities in our churches.
 - Its chief objective is to meet the needs of the various age groups ranging from childhood to adulthood.
 - It highlights the importance of intercessory prayer.
 - It is meant to become the lifestyle of every Adventist family.

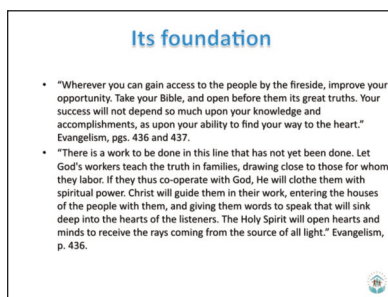
Slide 3



Ellen G. White, in Testimonies Vol. 9, p. 126, had a vision whereby entire families were introduced to the power of God's Word.

The foundation of Family to Family is expressed in the book Evangelism, p. 432. There is a powerful and special work for families in winning souls for Christ.

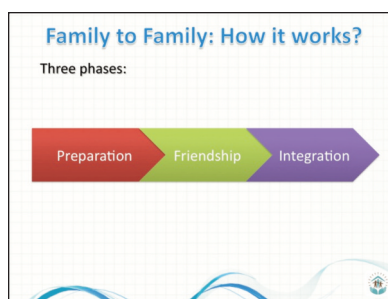
Slide 4



Its foundation

In these passages there is compelling counsel from Spirit of Prophecy for Families to use the family circle in teaching families about the liberating good news of the gospel.

Slide 5



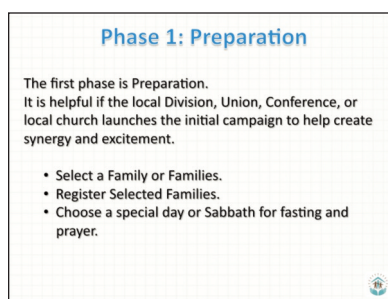
Family to Family: How it works?

Family to Family is easy to implement and can become the lifestyle of all Seventh-day Adventists.

There are 3 phases:

- Preparation
- Friendship
- Integration

Slide 6

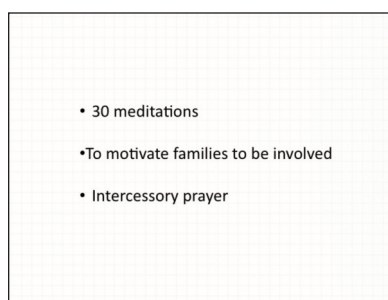


The first phase is Preparation.

It is helpful if the local Division, Union, Conference, or local church launches the initial campaign to help create synergy and excitement.

- **Select a Family or Families.** Each church family chooses one or more families in their community, neighborhood, or work to pray for.
- **Register Selected Families.** Families complete registration forms provided by the church or index cards with families name and contact information.
- **Choose a special day or Sabbath for fasting and prayer.** The church pastor and/or family ministries team selects a special day for prayer and fasting. This day is specially for families to prepare themselves to be used by God to share the gospel with other families.

Slide 7



During the next 30 days families will go through special devotionals at home to motivate them to become involved in Family to Family.


Families will also begin interceding on behalf of the families they have selected. Pray for courage to reach out to other families and for those families receptiveness to their friendship.

- 30 meditations
- To motivate families to be involved
- Intercessory prayer

Slide 8

Phase 2: Friendship

- Invite family home for a family meal or other activity.
- Follow up after meal with a phone call or visit to family.
- Ask if there is anything family would like you to pray for.
- If applicable offer brochure for specific issue.
- Invite selected family or families to small group meeting at your home.



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*Or arrange for your church to sponsor a *Youth Alive* seminar to protect teens from at risk behavior (see Youth Alive info in this Planbook 2013).

*The WIN Wellness program described in this Planbook is a good resource to use for small group activity. All families are interested in health in some form.

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Phase 3: Integration

- All the church departments stay aligned, united and focused on the same goal:
 - Parent gatherings
 - Family Life Seminars
 - Premarital preparation
 - Teenager programs
 - Singles Program
 - Women Program
- To this end they will plan purposeful events taking into account the age group of the family members
- All the events held throughout the year included in the calendar of the church

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Slide 10

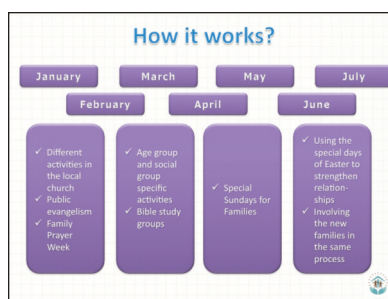
How it works?

September	October	November	December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each family chooses another or several families ✓ Registration form ✓ A special day of prayer and fasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Intercessory prayer ✓ Special devotional ✓ Special Sermons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Invitation for a meal ✓ Visit to families ✓ Giving out 4 brochures ✓ Special prayer needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Invitation to church ✓ "Friends of Hope" Day ✓ Invitation to small study groups ✓ Invitation for church (Christmas)
Intercessory prayer continues!!!			

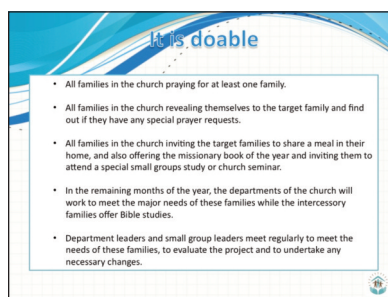
How it works?

Review full program with audience. This is what the program might look like in your calendar.

Slide 11



Slide 12



It is doable

- All families in the church praying for at least one family.
- All families in the church revealing themselves to the target family and find out if they have any special prayer requests.
- All families in the church inviting the target families to share a meal in their home, and also offering the missionary book of the year and inviting them to attend a special small groups study or church seminar.
- In the remaining months of the year, the departments of the church will work to meet the major needs of these families while the intercessory families offer Bible studies.
- Department leaders and small group leaders meet regularly to meet the needs of these families, to evaluate the project and to undertake any necessary changes.

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White, E. G. (1948). *Testimonies for the church, vol. 9*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

This program is an adaptation of a program from the West Central Brazil Union Mission.

Willie and Elaine Oliver are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters

Barna Magyarosi, ThD, is Director of the Department of Family Ministries for the Euro-African Division of Seventh-day Adventists



The Five Stages of Marriage

Adopted by Willie and Elaine Oliver

Michele Weiner-Davis, a well-known marriage researcher, suggests the following are the five stages most married couples can expect to experience during marriage: Stage One: Passion prevails. This is a time when couples concentrate on what they have in common, and are dominated by an intense physical desire for each other. This is the stage when many couples decide to marry. Survival tip—this stage will not last forever. However, when your ecstasy begins to fade, it does not mean your marriage is dying. This is a common cycle to expect in marriage.

Stage Two: What was I thinking? After the honeymoon period of bliss, couples have to get back to the daily routine of life like working and paying bills. During this time each person notices that the other is not all they expected. Their spouse has bad breath in the morning, and at other times. S/he spends too much time in the bathroom, and does not clean up promptly after meals. The feelings of being in a fantasy world—which is what takes place in stage one—are now gone, and the couple is at the place where they need to make decisions about the rest of their lives. For those in second marriages, the harsh reality of attempting to manage a blending family sets in. During this stage, couples question their sanity at the time they decided to marry the person they now seem to be stuck with for life. Survival tip—Be mindful of the fact that every marriage will experience conflict and challenges. Hopefully at this point you will be better prepared to accept what is happening to you. Stay connected by spending time together in different activities and by making a vigorous sex life a high priority.

Stage Three: Everything would be great if s/he could only change. Usually, the next ten years are spent trying to change their mates to be like themselves. When the preferred change does not take place, couples often face a fork in the road and some choose divorce or have affairs. Others decide to stick it out because of religious beliefs, financial considerations, or concern for their children. Among those who stay, some resign themselves to living in unhappy marriages, while others begin looking for better ways to communicate and manage conflict. Couples who choose the latter option are the ones who

are blessed, because the best of marriage is yet to be. Survival tip—Keep in mind that every marriage has stormy periods. Engaging the help of a professional Christian counselor may be a good thing at this time. Research suggests that eighty-six percent of unhappy couples that stay together despite the conflict say that they are much happier five years later (Waite and Gallagher 2000).

Stage Four: That's just the way s/he is! This is the stage at which couples accept the fact they will never be on the same page about everything with their spouse, and just find ways to live in peace despite the differences. Spouses realize at this stage that learning to forgive is important if they are going to make it, and accept that they are not that easy to live with either. Some couples mature to the point where they recognize that marriage is like everything else in life—there is always some bad with the good, or some good with the bad, and one needs to keep emphasizing the positive (the assumption here is that abuse is not taking place in the marriage). Survival tip—Do not ever make the mistake of thinking you have arrived in your relationship. Continue to nurture your relationship every day by spending time together, talking, and touching.

Stage Five: Together, at last. By the time couples get to this stage of their marriage they have spent quite a bit of time together making history. They have come to the place where they agree that marriage is difficult, and have a sense of accomplishment because of the trials they have faced together and have overcome. They have a greater appreciation for the strengths of their spouse and are no longer as easily threatened by their differences. Because their children are now older and more independent, this gives couples more time to focus on each other and enjoy more quality time together. There is a sense that they have come full circle and have learned the dance of marriage. Survival tip—Keep yourself healthy and active so that you can enjoy the fruits of your labor. Remember that marriage is worth fighting for each and every day (Weiner-Davis 2001).

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Willie and Elaine Oliver are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters.



The Blessings of Affirmation

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

A dictionary definition of *affirmation* is the act of affirming or a positive assertion made about someone (Merriam-Webster 1996). In general, relationship experts suggest that affirming a person one is in relationship with is wonderful for the person being affirmed, for the person doing the affirming, as well as for the relationship between these individuals.

When parents choose to affirm their children, such an undertaking helps create a strong and positive self-esteem in those children. A positive self-esteem, of course, produces feelings of belonging, of being capable and of being loved.

Affirmation between spouses—also a choice—is truly the stuff that makes for stronger and healthier marriages and for a happier and more peaceful home environment. If it is true that trying to develop a relationship without communicating is like trying to make orange juice without oranges (Olson and Olson p. 23); it is also true that happy couples experience five times as many positive interactions than negative interactions (Gottman pp. 56-57), and this we call affirmation.

Galatians 5:22-23 declares: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

An inventory of contrasting virtues to the ones presented in Galatians 5:22-23, Galatians 5:19-21 states: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

While the works of the flesh are naturally exhibited in the lives of human beings, the lifestyle illustrated in Galatians 5:22-23 is not produced by one who simply professes to be a believer, but by the Spirit of God working through a person who has chosen Christ every day.

To practice a life of affirmation—which represents the Spirit of Jesus—we will need to make the choice each day to live as Jesus lived. For this kind of existence to be operationalized in our relationships with our spouse, children and others we come in contact with, we will need to do as Paul declares in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Is it your custom every day to affirm the people in your household and those you come in contact with? These individuals may be your spouse, your children, your parents and siblings, your in-laws, your neighbors, your co-workers, your employees, the shopkeeper, the rickshaw driver, and anyone else. If this is not your custom at this time, you can choose to make this your way of life.

The more you choose to affirm people, the more you will feel and be like Jesus. The more you choose to rely on Jesus, the more likely you will be to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The more often you choose to live your life in this way, the more you will bless those around you and help create an atmosphere of love, peace and grace in your home, in the church, and in your community.

Even in moments of difficulty and shame, Jesus found ways to affirm people toward wholeness. Jesus did so with the woman caught in adultery (John 8); with Zacchaeus who climbed up the sycamore tree in Jericho (Luke 19); with the 10 lepers He found as He entered a certain village (Luke 17); and with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in a city called Sychar (John 4).

If we stay close to Jesus and choose Him every day, we too will receive power to live in positive and healthier relationships, and make our homes, our churches and our world a better place. What’s more, we will bless people and be effective witnesses for Jesus.

Affirmation is a sign of healthy family relationships. It is true that: “He who lives Christianity in the home will be a bright and shining light everywhere” (White p. 39).

We pray you will bless someone today!

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All Biblical references are from the New King James Version

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R And R Through Mind Renewal

By Sally Lam-Phoon

To many, R & R stands for rest and relaxation. It brings feeling of heightened anticipation at the thought of having a restful break from the humdrum of life that often drives us to the edge of insanity.

In the spiritual sense, R&R stands for revival and reformation—the theme adopted by the global Seventh-day Adventist Church for this quinquennium (2010-2015). To live the abundant life promised in John 10:10, we need to be revived and to be reformed. When we experience revival and reformation, we can reap the fruits of true rest and relaxation, confident in the constant watchcare of a Heavenly Father who knows what is best for us at every step.

Why is revival needed? A person needs to be revived when he or she has fainted or even died. Unfortunately, this is true of many of us in a spiritual sense. Many of us are spiritually dead so we need to be resurrected to a new life. Yes, we are still walking and breathing but we only “hang” the name of “Adventist” or “Christian” on our exteriors while for years we have experienced no change whatsoever as we live our routine lives from day to day. The call for revival is necessary to wake us up to a renewal of spiritual living. Ellen White puts it so clearly:

A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. (White, 1958, p. 128 [Review and Herald, Feb 25, 1902]).

Romans 8:10, 11 tells us that:

“If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from

the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

In the spiritual realm revival is very much a part of Christian living.

If the first “R” stands for “revival,” the second “R” which stands for “reformation” is an absolute necessity which follows close on the heels of revival. What is reformation? There is a clarion call for transformation found in Romans 12:2: “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.”

Further, 2 Corinthians 3:18 explains succinctly that when we are filled by the Spirit, He changes us to be more and more like Jesus: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed* into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

In the above two texts, it is important to note the verbs are in the passive voice—meaning that we do not change ourselves but someone else changes us. As sinful human beings, we are not capable of reformation in our lives but whatever changes take place, can be attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Revival and reformation must blend in order to bear fruit in the individual life; it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives that brings this about. When a person is revived, reformation follows as “a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices” (White, 1958 p. 128). The process doesn’t result in a self-righteous attitude that condemns others. Rather it will result in change and transformation in the way we live our daily lives, the way we relate to our loved ones, our friends and our community. In this area, we will choose to focus on evaluating ourselves rather than judging others. Most times, the best test of change is to check with our family members if we have truly been more Christ-like.

In 1 Samuel, we find a young lad, named David, who spends much time on the hills of Bethlehem tending his sheep. All alone out in the wild, he chose to occupy his time composing hymns and psalms of praise on his harp and focusing his mind on God. Later, when we meet David in 1 Samuel 17, we find him on the battlefield visiting his brothers who were in the military service of Israel.

Here was the entire Israelite army, completely paralyzed, intimidated by the giant, Goliath who represented the invincible Philistine army or so it appeared. David didn’t see this invincible giant. In David’s eyes Goliath was not an invincible Giant, he saw the enemy, how God’s name was being slandered and how God was being insulted. He was indignant—he volunteered to stand up to this giant and let him know that God is not someone you can defy.

David wanted to make Yahweh known to the world as the most powerful God on earth. Didn’t he have the experience of past victories over a lion and bear that attacked his sheep? Didn’t he overcome them in the name of God? He was very confident that this

same God would deliver His people from this Philistine bully! “He saw Goliath not as a threat too big to hit, but as a target too big to miss!” (Maxwell and Elmore, 1982, p. 348).

David had a mindset totally different from Saul and the rest of his army on that mountain because his focus was on God. He had kept the channels of communication open out on the hills and valleys while he watched his sheep. The Holy Spirit was working on changing his attitudes, his ideas and his habits so that he saw what others didn't see—a golden opportunity to exalt the name of God that had been trampled down by a heathen like Goliath.

Have you ever heard the expression, “it's all in your head”? David had a perspective that was so refreshingly opposed to that of Saul and his entire army. If we are to emulate the thinking of David, we need to allow our God to change our thought patterns.

Dr. Ben Carson, one of the world's top pediatric neurosurgeons describes the brain this way: “a normal human brain is perhaps the single most marvelous and complex piece in the great three-dimensional master puzzle of creation” (Carson and Lewis, 1999, p. 32).

Join me in an activity that will demonstrate how our brain works. Raise your right hand. Draw a circle clockwise. Keep doing this while you now raise your right foot and draw a circle clockwise. Keep your hand and foot going. Now, with your right hand, reverse your circle to go anti-clockwise. What happens? Notice that your foot naturally follows the direction that your right hand is moving in. Why does this happen? The answer is simple: This is how God programmed our brain. This is our default neural programming.

The question is, can you change this default programming? All who work with computers will tell you that the default can always be changed. Hence, can you actually have your hand draw an anti-clockwise circle and your right foot to draw a clockwise circle? Yes, you can, but it takes time, it takes effort and it takes practice; it means that you have to re-program your neurons. The experts suggest that the establishment of a habit takes 21 days of practice.

Scientists are just beginning to discover the wonders of our brain and how its functions control every thought, feeling, and action. A human brain weighs only 3 pounds yet it contains 100 billion neurons. Each neuron/brain cell has the capacity to make up to 1,000 connections/synapses at any one time. These synapses fire 1-100 times per second as we move, think, feel and do different things (Hanson, 2008, p. 285).

This whole process is rather miraculous with thousands of messages relayed from the brain and various parts of the body to result in hundreds of billions of connections called neural pathways. As these pathways are traveled over and over again as in the case of a musician practicing his music pieces, a habit is formed. Habits are actions that become automatic as the neural pathways become permanent. However, these neural connections are not static but always changing; new pathways are being formed while others die out from disuse. The scientists call this neuro-plasticity--the ability to change, to establish new neural pathways. In a spiritual sense, this is good news, we can be changed if we choose to, if we focus on renewing our minds daily.

So, in our own spiritual lives, how does spiritual transformation actually take place? Here are 5 steps we can follow in this quest for mind renewal.

STEP ONE: It begins with spending quiet time with God alone everyday, reading His Word and praying earnestly that you choose to surrender to God. Even this thought does not come from within ourselves; it is initiated by the Holy Spirit. Our part is to give in to His plea for us to align ourselves with the mind of Jesus Christ. Simply tell God to take away all that is destroying your spiritual life.

STEP TWO: Be willing to listen. As God speaks to you when you spend quiet time with Him, listen intently. What is He telling you regarding the change He wants to see in your life? Is it the fact that you have been putting off that visit to an old friend? Is it that uncontrollable bad temper you have? Or perhaps it may be the addiction to pornography that you know for sure is wrong but you feel drawn to it like a magnet each time you switch on the computer?

STEP THREE: Tell the Lord that you are willing to change, so when He prompts you right in the face of temptation, choose to blaze a brand new neural pathway.

STEP FOUR: Make that new connection with your neurons by putting your thoughts into action. If you have been procrastinating about that visit to an old friend, put it on the schedule and plan to follow through with it—set it as a priority.

If you find yourself about to explode in front of your spouse and you hear the Spirit's whisper in your ear, keep your mouth shut, run to the bathroom and cool yourself down with a cold shower.

If you feel the need to visit that pornographic website again, resist it, whisper a prayer for help, move away from the computer. Change into your exercise clothes and go for a vigorous run.

STEP FIVE: These new neural paths you have just traveled over once need to be reinforced again and again and again. Remember that a new habit takes 21 days to establish. Keep relying on God's Word and prayer to see you through. Repeat His promises for victory over and over to yourself. This is important because it is so easy to return to those old neural patterns. The idea is to persist on blazing those new paths until they become permanent and to allow those old sinful neural pathways to wither away and die from disuse.

My own spiritual journey with the Lord led me one day to wake up to the fact that I had been nagging my poor husband for almost 40 years! Usually, the nagging focuses on one major topic—that of his health. My husband enjoys food but unfortunately, his top favorites include items that prove very detrimental to his health.

One morning while reading Proverbs in the Message Bible, I came across this text (27:15) which says, "A nagging spouse is like the drip, drip, drip of a leaky faucet; You can't turn it off, and you can't get away from it." Nagging is a joy killer and one that damages relationships. I heard the Holy Spirit whispering that I needed to stop this

nagging. After all, it had never worked all these forty years, so why do it? Why not replace it with encouragement instead?

After prayer and a hearty breakfast, we were walking to work when the subject of lunch came up. My husband told me that he had plans to eat out that day. My instant reaction was to nag him: Why do you choose to eat that unhealthy food again? Don't you know that the food is oily which works against what the doctor said about your clogged up arteries . . . and on and on.

Just as I was enjoying my favorite "hobby," I heard a soft whisper in my ear. The Holy Spirit was bringing back Proverbs 27:15 to my memory and He told me, "Stop!" The voice was clear. Now would I choose to ignore it and continue to rant and rave or shall I stop?

Praise God, He gave me the strength to shut my mouth right there and I became quiet for a few seconds. Then I changed the topic to something more pleasant instead. A new pathway had been forged. God is not finished with me yet. At times, I still forget and go merrily down those old familiar neural pathways, but the Holy Spirit is still working on me to reprogram my neurons. To replace that old "hobby", my new approach is to look for ways to encourage my husband whenever he makes the slightest effort to eat right.

Conclusion

What is your current challenge? What has God prompted you to change recently? Which aspect of your life does God want to transform? Transformation is easy when we tap into the power of the Holy Spirit but first, we must be willing to let God take over and that is a decision to be made by each individual, by you and me as we seek renewal everyday. When we invite Christ in, then truly we may have R&R--revival and reformation plus the bonus of resting and relaxing in Him. Our lives will take on a new shine; our relationships will be enriched as a result.

The Clear Word Bible puts Romans 12:1, 2 so plainly: "Since God loves us so much, I beg you to offer yourselves a living sacrifice to Him. Show your love by obeying and worshiping Him. Don't let the world change you. Let God change you and guide your thinking. Then you'll know what to do to please Him." God is willing to re-program us; are you willing to allow Him to?

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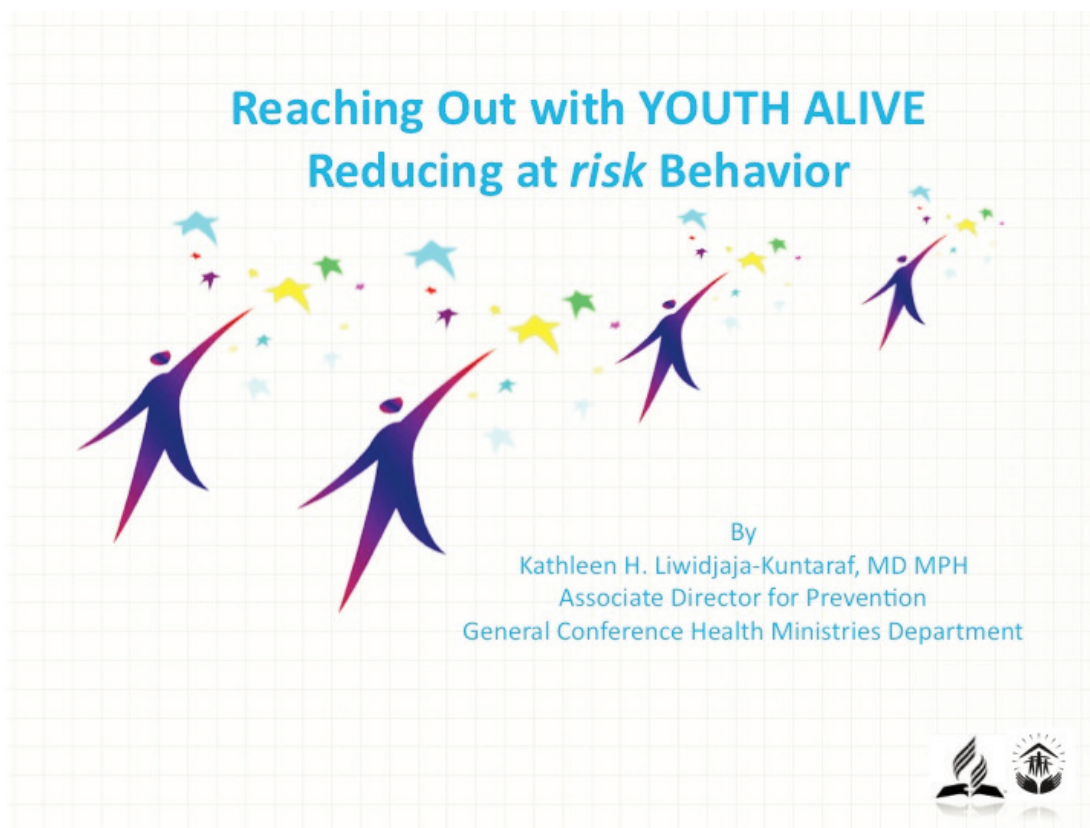
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Reaching Out with Youth Alive!

By Kathleen Kuntaraf



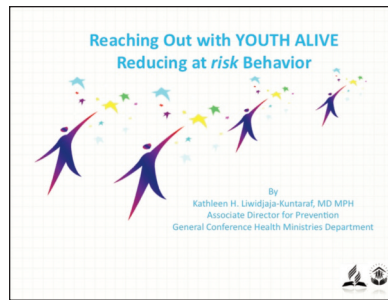
Note to the Presenter:

This seminar is designed to introduce pastors, parents, and ministry leaders to the “Youth Alive” program (see description below).

The slides contain all necessary information for the workshop except where there are additional notes in the notes section.

Welcome to the Youth Alive – reducing at risk behaviors mini seminar presentation which will provide you with information on how a comprehensive prevention approach to the youth’s at-risk behavior problems works best.

Slide 1



Note to the Presenter:

This seminar is designed to introduce pastors, parents, and ministry leaders to the “Youth Alive” program (see description below).

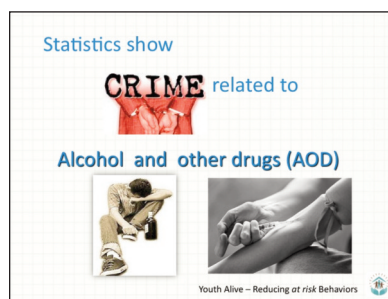
The slides contain all necessary information for the workshop except where there are additional notes in the notes section.

Youth Alive - Reducing At Risk Behaviors

By Kathleen Kiem Hoa Oey Kuntaraf MD, MPH Associate Director for Prevention General Conference Health Ministries Department

Welcome to the Youth Alive – reducing at risk behaviors mini seminar presentation which will provide you with information on how a comprehensive prevention approach to the youth’s at-risk behavior problems works best.

Slide 2



In the summary findings of the US Bureau of Justice Statistics 2002, which collected their data from the following sources:

- *National Crime Victimization Survey*
- *Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics*
- *Federal Justice Statistics Program*
- *National Judicial Reporting Program*
- *State Court Processing Statistics*
- *National Survey of Prosecutors*
- *National Prisoner Statistics*

- *Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities*
- *Census of Jails*
- *Survey of Inmates in Local Jails*
- *Surveys of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities/Federal Correctional Facilities*
- *Survey of Adults on Probation*
- *Annual Probation Data Survey and Parole Data Survey*
- *Source book of Criminal Justice Statistics*

[U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2002). Washington, DC.]

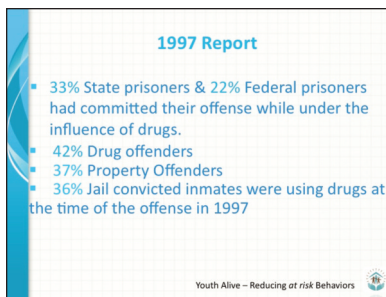
All clearly show that crime is very closely related to the use of alcohol and other drugs (AOD).

Slide 3



- About 1.2 million violent crimes occurred each year in which victims reported that the offender had been drinking. 1 in 4 of these violent victimizations involved alcohol and other drugs.
- Among probationers surveyed in 1995, 14% reported they were on drugs when they committed their offense.

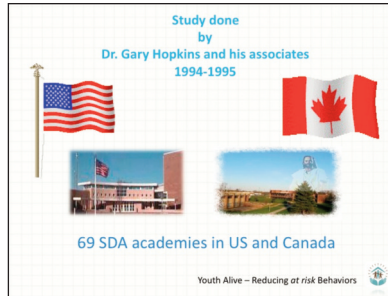
Slide 4



- 33% of State prisoners and 22% of Federal prisoners said they had committed their current offense while under the influence of drugs as reported in 1997.
- Drug offenders (42%) and property offenders (37%) reported the highest incidence of drug use at the time of the offense.
- 36% of convicted jail inmates said they were using drugs at the time of their offense in 1998.

[U.S. Department of Justice, 2002]

Slide 5



Dr. Gary Hopkins and his associates did a study during the 1994-1995 academic year on 9 SDA Academies in the U.S. and Canada.

In the fiscal year of 1999, the Federal, State and local governments of the US spent more than \$146 billion for civil and criminal justice, which is an 8% increase over 1998. What a devastating impact of drugs resulting in crimes. Of course we cannot put a monetary value on human lives and suffering associated with AOD related problems. However, we know that the cost of child welfare, and the court cost needed to arrest, try, sentence, and incarcerate those found guilty of the billion dollars of AOD related offenses are a tremendous drain on the Nation's resources.

Challenges:

Legislation ignores the fact that the most dangerous drugs that cause the most amounts of harm are already legal — alcohol and nicotine. It is very unfortunate that SDA youth are not exempt from these problems. The study done by Dr. Gary Hopkins and his associates among SDA youth attending 69 SDA academies throughout US and Canada in 1994-1995 showed that:

Slide 6

Substance Used by Youth	Adventist Youth attending SDA schools	Non-Adventist Youth attending public schools
Alcohol	45.7%	81.7%
Tobacco	31%	71.3%
Marijuana	16%	37.2%
Cocaine	3.5%	4.8%
Hard drug (non-Cocaine)	7.6%	18.4%
Injected illegal drug	0.9%	2.4%


Youth Alive - Reducing at risk Behaviors

[Show chart] The results are as follows. Results contain

Adventist youth participating in the study reported lower levels of substance abuse than non-Adventist youth attending public school results [alcohol 45.7% vs 81.7%; tobacco 31% vs 71.3%; marijuana 16% vs 37.2%, cocaine 3.5% vs 4.8%, hard drug (non-cocaine) 7.6% vs 18.4%, injected illegal drug 0.9% vs 2.4%].

Slide 7

Study by Dr. Gary Hopkins & Associates




Substance Used by Youth	Adventist Youth using drugs and alcohol before 13 yrs.	Non-Adventist Youth using drugs/alcohol before 13 yrs.
Alcohol	20.2%	32.4%
Tobacco	13.6%	24.9%
Marijuana	7.6%	12.5%
Cocaine	0.6%	1.2%

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

[Show chart] The number of Adventist students using drugs and alcohol who began to do so before the age of 13 was fewer than non-Adventist youth attending public school [alcohol 20.2% vs 32.4%; tobacco 13.6% vs 24.9%; marijuana 7.6 % vs 12.5%, cocaine 0.6% vs 1.2%].

Slide 8

Study by Dr. Gary Hopkins & Associates



Adventist Youth and Sexual Experience (SDA Schools)	Non-Adventist Youth and Sexual Experience (Public Schools)
16.3%	53.1%

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

[Show chart] Adventist students were also less sexually experienced than their non-Adventist counterparts in public schools— 16.3% (Adventist) vs 53.1% (non-Adventist).

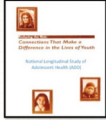
[Hopkins, G. L., Hopp J., Hopp, M. H., Neish, C., and Rhoads, G. (1998). AIDS risk among students attending Seventh-day Adventist schools in North America. *Journal of School Health* 68, (4), pp. 141-145.]

The youth that belong to the youth department are in the educational setting and are being supervised by the education department. They have a drug problem which is a health problem, and they belong to a family which is being led by the Family Ministries department. Therefore, the General Conference & North American Division Youth, Education, Health and Family Ministries departments collaboratively launch the Youth Alive program, to save our young people from getting involved in at risk behaviors.

Slide 9

Supporting Study Published in JAMA, 1997

- Involved 90,000 teenagers
- 18,000 parents across US
- Provides 2 vital factors protecting children and youth from *at risk* behaviors



Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

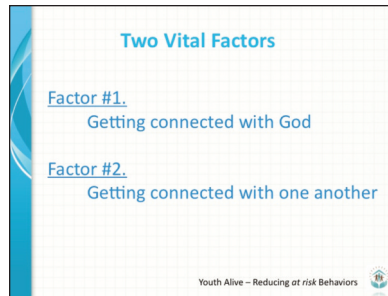
Supporting Study:

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (ADD) that was published in the *Journal of American Medical Association* in 1997, involving 90,000 teenagers and 18,000 parents across the United States, provides two vital factors that protect children and youth from many at *risk* behaviors such as becoming involved in premarital sexual activity, violence, suicidal attempts and drug use.

They are: [Next slide]

[Blum, W. and Rinehart, M., 1997, pp. 823-932.]

Slide 10



Two Vital Factors

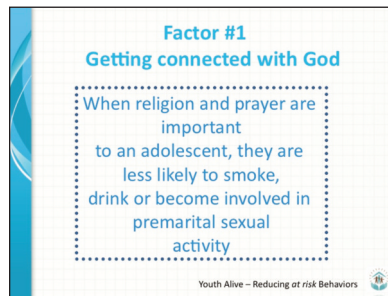
Factor #1

Getting connected with God

Factor #2

Getting connected with one another

Slide 11

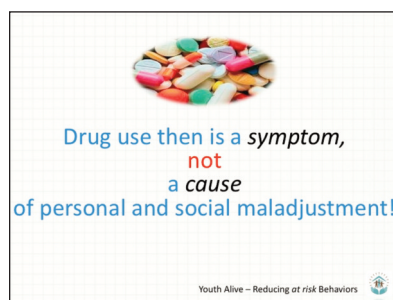


Factor #1

Getting connected with God

When religion and prayer are important to an adolescent, they are less likely to smoke, drink or become involved in premarital sexual activity.

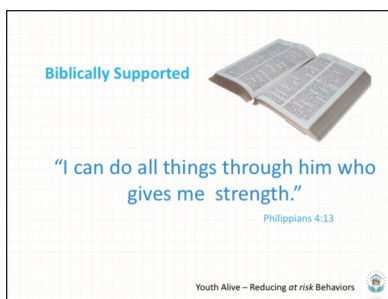
Slide 12



Many people use drugs due to significant maladjustments, trying to escape from the problems faced, ranging from negative peer pressures to crises at home, school or in the work place. So drug use is a symptom and not a cause of personal and social maladjustment. Those drugs used to produce psychologic dependence particularly the mood and sensational altering drugs affecting the central nervous system, will make them feel better than they have ever felt in their lives.

- their anxiety and tension are reduced
- they feel elated, euphoric or experience other pleasurable mood changes
- they provide relief from boredom and alleviate pain
- they increase mental and physical ability
- they provide a temporary distortion of reality

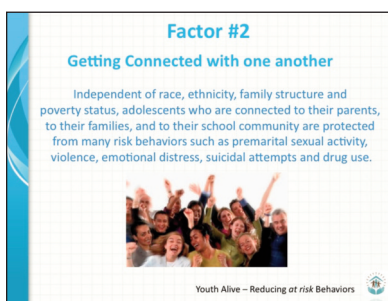
Slide 13



It is clear that the impact of drugs is very powerful. Therefore, removing the power of the drug will make them feel "lost," unless it is replaced with something else as powerful or more powerful than the drug itself. The only power stronger than the effect of a drug is the power of Jesus Christ (a healthy vertical connectedness). This is biblically supported.

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13

Slide 14

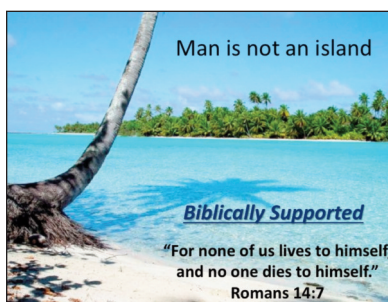


Factor #2

Getting connected with one another

Independent of race, ethnicity, family structure and poverty status, adolescents who are connected to their parents, to their families, and to their school community are protected from many at risk behaviors such as premarital sexual activity, violence, emotional distress, suicidal attempts and drug use.

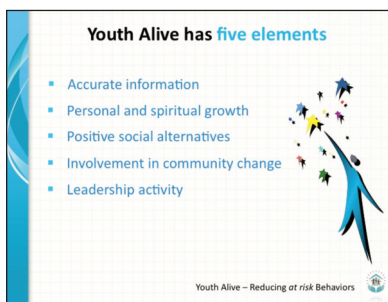
Slide 15



No man is an island. We all long to be accepted and be connected with one another for support and encouragement (a healthy horizontal connectedness). This is biblically supported too.

"For none lives to himself, and no one dies to himself." Romans 14:7

Slide 16



Youth Alive (also known as the Adventist Youth to Youth) incorporates these two important factors of connectedness with God and connectedness among youth with other youth and adults in the program. It has five basic elements:

- Accurate information
- Personal and spiritual growth
- Positive social alternatives
- Involvement in community change
- Leadership activity

Slide 17

]Accurate information

- Needed to make informed decisions not to use drugs
- Can be given in the form of workshops or in the general presentation

This is needed in order to make informed decisions not to use drugs. It can be given in the form of workshops or in the general presentation.

Slide 18

]Personal and spiritual growth

- Can be developed in small Friendship Group (FG) consisting of 10-12 members
- Abides by ground rules "no put downs"
- Believes in "Honor, Dignity and Respect"

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

FG's, games, workshop topics and community outreach programs can be held in various classrooms. Individual groups can gather in a general session for content and discussion.

Slide 19

]Positive social alternatives

A positive social environment is being established - making connectedness easier to take place!

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Personal and spiritual growth

Personal and spiritual growth can be developed in a small group setting called the Friendship Group (FG), made up of 10-12 people, who abides in their ground rules which include "no put downs." Youth Alive believes in the "Honor, Dignity and Respect" philosophy where every person is valued as a child of God, regardless of their background. So as these FG members meet together in a safe environment, they will feel free to share their problems with one another, encourage one another which results in a real connectedness with one another and with God — the important factors in reducing risky behaviors.

Slide 20

] Involvement in community change

Youth need to be allowed to plan and take responsibility to solve problems in their neighborhood and schools



Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors


Positive social alternatives

As the participants abide by the “Honor, Dignity and Respect” philosophy, a positive social environment is being developed that makes the connectedness among one another easier to take place. This philosophy includes fellowship with one another during meal time, or working together in presenting the FG Gifts, playing together in fun cooperative games, recognizing the many positive things in others that they express through their compliments, smiles, friendship hugs and personal notes to one another stuck on the Warm Fuzzy board. It is misleading to use the term positive social “alternatives,” because it is actually drugs and alcohol that are being used as alternatives by people who don’t know how to have fun naturally.

Slide 21

] Leadership activity

- Youth need to experience making a difference in their world
- They can be actively trained to lead out in the FG or small group activity



Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Involvement in community change

Youth need to be allowed to plan and take responsibility to solve problems in their neighborhood and schools, and bring changes in the community through their Youth Alive conference community outreach activities, as well as in their regular Youth Alive local clubs. By doing this, they will gain self-efficacy and greater self-respect.

Slide 22

Youth Alive Fulfills the Imperatives Recommended by the Valuegenesis Study

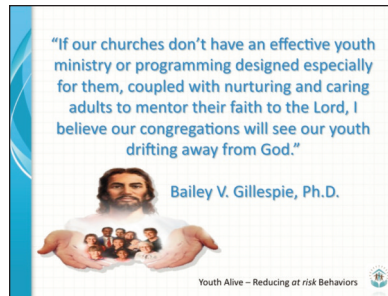
- Climate of warmth and openness
- Proper understanding of grace
- Dynamic, interactive worship experiences that give a sense of God’s love and will for the participants’ lives
- Challenging environment promoting individuals to think and learn

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Leadership activity

Youth need to experience making a difference in their world. They could be actively trained to lead out in the FG or small group activity.

Slide 23



All of these elements above, fulfill the four imperatives recommended by the Valuegenesis study to contribute to the spiritual growth of the youth: (1) a climate of warmth and openness; (2) a proper understanding of grace; (3) dynamic, interactive worship experiences that give a sense of God's love and will for the participants' lives, and (4) a challenging environment promoting individuals to think and learn. [Leonie, A., 1991, pp. 14-15]

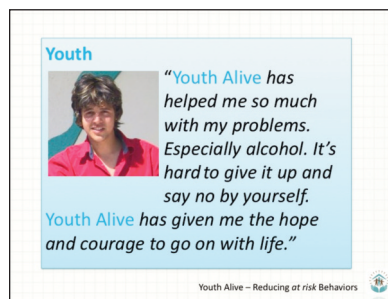
This kind of team work in discipling our youth ministry is absolutely valuable.

Slide 24



"If our churches don't have an effective youth ministry or programming designed especially for them, coupled with nurturing and caring adults to mentor their faith to the Lord, I believe our congregations will see our youth drifting away from God." [Gillespie, Bailey, 1991, pp. 5-11]

Slide 25



Comments from the Youth Alive participants:

It is amazing, wherever the Youth Alive program is launched in the various countries around the world with representatives coming from a variety of cultures, such as the Americans, Romanians, Russians, Czechs, Germans, Spanish, Italians, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Malaysians, Indonesians, Filipinos, Africans, Mauritians, Madagascans, Mongolians, etc., a vast majority feel very positive about it. Negative words expressed, never exceeded a total of 6 percent at any conference, which means that 94 percent of the respondents expressed positive words about the conference. Indeed the "Honor, Dignity and Respect" philosophy is accepted in all cultures.

A sample of response from the adult and youth participants [next slides]:

Slide 26



Mother
"My daughter was scared to join the university. Fortunately the school's orientation program used Youth Alive principles. Now, my daughter has friends from her FG that support her, so she no longer feels lonely. I am truly grateful for this orientation program which made it easier for my daughter to remain in the school."
Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Responses from adults and students who had an orientation program using the Youth Alive principles:

Adult:

"Through our years at (academy) we have taken lots of students to various types of activities, but none have had the positive impact of Youth Alive. It is unique and effective, and we're convinced this is the kind of innovative approach we need to meet the needs of our young people in the coming years."

Youth:

"Through our years at (academy) we have taken lots of students to various types of activities, but none have had the positive impact of Youth Alive. It is unique and effective, and we're convinced this is the kind of innovative approach we need to meet the needs of our young people in the coming years."

Slide 27



Workshops in Various Classrooms
General Session
Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Responses from Parents of students who had an orientation program using the Youth Alive principles:

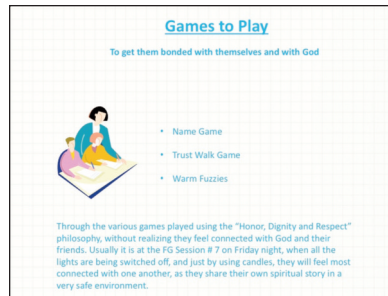
Father:

"Before my son enrolled in the university, he was apprehensive about the new environment. Fortunately the orientation program was made using the Youth Alive principles and now he feels greatly connected with his friends."

Mother:

"My daughter was scared to join the university. Fortunately the school's orientation program used Youth Alive principles. Now, my daughter has friends from Friendship Group that support her, so she no longer feels lonely. I am truly grateful for this orientation program which made it easier for my daughter to remain in the school."

Slide 28



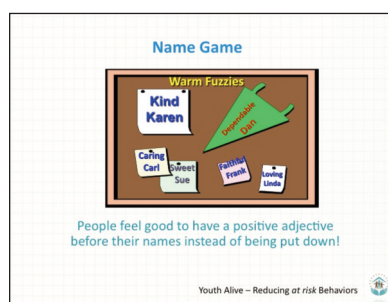
Games to Play:

- Name Game
- Trust Walk Game
- Warm Fuzzies

Through the various games played using the "Honor, Dignity and Respect" philosophy, without realizing they feel connected with God and their friends. Usually it is at the FG Session # 7 on Friday night, when all the lights are being switched off, and just by using candles, they will feel most connected with one another, as they share their own spiritual story in a very safe environment.

The following three slides will give a description, goal and list materials needed for each of these games.

Slide 29



Exposures:

To give you an idea of what it is like for a young person to be in the **Friendship Group (FG)**, let's divide all mini seminar participants into groups of 4. Pick out the youngest of the group to lead out while the oldest of the group gives the support. Stick a colored label on each group.

Please play the *Name Game*. Request the various colored cluster groups to return to the larger group and process the games played, for example: "What did you learn from this Name Game?"

One response may be: people feel good to have a positive adjective before their names instead of being put down.


Imagine this being the way people call you throughout the conference! It helps the participants to focus more easily on the positive traits of others. Therefore we are operating in a positive environment.

5 to 15 participants sit in a circle. One person will start by saying a positive adjective that describes himself/herself and that starts with the same letter as his/her first name; then that person says his/her name. For example: Funny Freddy or Terrific Tanya. The second person should repeat the first person's adjective and name before going on to say his/her own adjective and name. The third person will say the first and second person's full name and then say his/her own adjective and name. This continues until the last person repeats everyone's full name and ends the activity by saying his/her own adjective and name. NOTE: the adjective must be a positive word, not one which *puts down* the individual.


The goal: an initial awareness of each person's personality. The group members should be able to remember each other's names. They are given the opportunity to interact in a fun, but low risk situation.

Slide 30

Trust Walk Game



- What did you learn from this Trust Game?
- How do you feel being close to the leader?
- How do you feel being at the tail-end?
- Do you have the same feeling if you are close to God or far away from Him?

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors 

We play games with a purpose to get them bonded not only with themselves, but with God. So, let's try another spiritual game by breaking into the various colored cluster groups again. Have the youngest lead out and the oldest give the full support. Play the **Trust Walk** game.

Materials Needed: Blindfolds, if possible

Make a line of group members, holding hands. All members except the leader are blindfolded or eyes closed. The leader must lead the group over obstacles safely by explaining where they are going. Walk slowly and carefully to build group trust. After 2-3 minutes, stop; the leader then becomes the tail of the line with the second in line becoming the new leader. Continue until every group member has had a chance to lead.

The goal is to learn to trust people by taking risks with them.

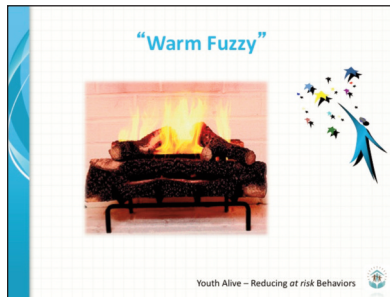
Request the various colored cluster groups to return to the larger group and discuss the walk, and how the members learned to trust the people leading them. Ask the following questions:

- What did you learn from this Trust Game?
- How do you feel being close to the leader?
- How do you feel being at the tail end?
- Do you have the same feeling if you are close to God?
- How do you feel when you are far away from God?

Responses may include:

- people feel confident being close to the leader just like you feel confident when you are close to God.
- people feel unsure being at the tail end just like when you are far from God you feel stressed out.

Slide 31



Let's divide again into the cluster groups and allow them to write a "Warm Fuzzy" to the number they draw from the group. Remember to address the person you are writing the warm fuzzy to, with the positive adjective. Say something complimentary only about that person. Then paste the warm fuzzy on the warm fuzzy board under the same alphabet with the initial alphabet of that person's name you are writing to. After this mini seminar, each participant can get their own warm fuzzy from the board.

Request the various colored cluster groups to return to the larger group and discuss the following:

- Is it easy to give compliments? Why or why not?
- Can you imagine what it would be like if the whole school or community of believers address each other in a positive way instead of criticizing and condemning one another?

Slide 32

Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.





Exhibit containing Abraham Lincoln's personal items:

- Confederate \$5.00 bill
- Small penknife
- Broken spectacle case held with a cotton string
- Worn-out newspaper clipping about the President



Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Every normal human being needs to receive warm fuzzies, or words of encouragement including youth.

If you visit the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C., there is a relatively small exhibit that contains the personal items found on Abraham Lincoln the night he was shot. They include a Confederate five-dollar bill, a small penknife, a broken spectacle case held together with a cotton string, and a worn-out newspaper clipping written about the President.


The article begins with these words, “Abe Lincoln is one of the greatest statesmen of all time.”

Imagine, even President Lincoln needed the affirmation that he was capable of being the leader he wanted to be.

Slide 33

Exposing Youth

- To “warm fuzzies”
- To the FG environment
- To the “Honor, Dignity, and Respect” philosophy



Contributes to the Positive Environment where connectedness and unity among youth and adults takes place easily!!

The need to use drugs to temporarily alleviate problems, is no longer there !

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

So exposing the youth to the warm fuzzies or encouraging words, and the FG environment where everyone treats others based on the “Honor, Dignity, and Respect” philosophy, all will contribute to the positive environment where the connectedness and unity among youth and adults easily takes place. Once they feel good about themselves, the need to use drugs to temporarily alleviate their problem is no longer there.

Slide 34

Suggested Youth Alive Conference

Ratio for Training



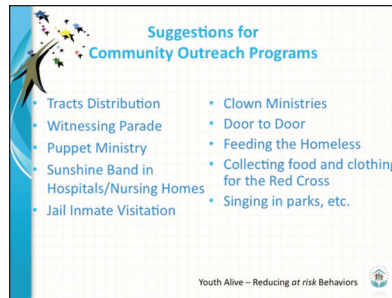
1 Adult 1 youth facilitator for each FG of 10-12 members

Youth Alive – Reducing of risk Behaviors

Suggested Youth Alive Conference:

The ratio for training is one adult facilitator and one youth facilitator for each FG consisting of 10-12 members. Therefore, if there are 500 Youth Alive congress participants, we need 100 people (50 adult facilitators and 50 youth facilitators) to be trained as FG leaders one day prior to the conference.

Slide 35



Youth Alive suggestions for Community Outreach Programs:

- Tracts Distribution
- Witnessing Parade
- Puppet Ministry
- Sunshine Band in Hospitals/Nursing Homes
- Jail Inmate Visitation
- Clown Ministries
- Door to Door
- Feeding the Homeless
- Collecting food and clothing for the Red Cross
- Singing in Parks, etc.

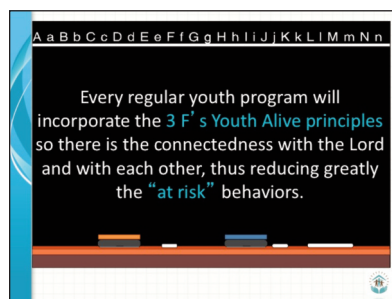
Slide 36



Suggested topics for the Youth Alive Workshops:

- Sex Communication to Youth (3 hours)
- Dealing with Youth Temperaments
- Parent Child Dynamics (3 hours)
- Sharing Gospel with Unique Visuals (3 hours)
- Peer Counseling, etc.
- Why Abstinence?
- Avoiding HIV
- Knowing About Drugs and the Law
- Learning about Addiction
- Roots of Addiction
- Living with Addiction
- Collections of Straight Talk from Real Teens about Substance Abuse, etc.

Slide 37



RECOMMENDATION:

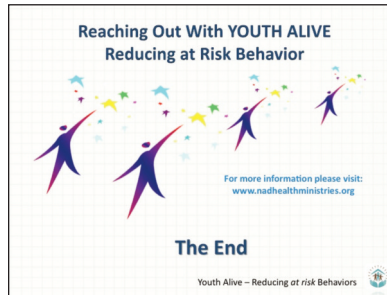
WHEREAS Protection of youth from unhealthy lifestyles and their consequences is a concern of the Youth, Education, Health, and Family Ministries departments.

Scientific studies reveal the importance of the vertical and horizontal connectedness, in reducing at-risk behavior among youth.

The Youth Alive model, provides a milieu of small group settings, where both education and support can be given, therefore it is recommended that:

Every program that the local church Family Ministries leader conducts to reach-out to our youth will incorporate the Youth Alive principles (3 F's – Fun, Focus, and Friendship). Our goal is to build a connectedness with the Lord and with one another, thus reducing at risk behaviors.

Slide 38



Reaching Out With YOUTH ALIVE

Reducing at Risk Behavior

For more information please visit:
www.nadhealthministries.org

The End

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Courageous

*Sherwood Pictures, DVD
By Kendrick Bros., LLC.
©2011*

*Courageous: A Novel
By Randy Acorn
Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 392 pages
©2011*

Reviewed by Kathleen Sowards

The Bible is full of men and women courageous enough to take a stand for God – no matter the cost. Can you name your favorite? (Noah, Abraham, Rebecca, Daniel and his three friends, Esther, Paul, Peter, Timothy’s grandmother, etc.)

Listen to these quotes from the Spirit of Prophecy and the Scriptures:

“Parents, if you would educate your children to serve God and do good in the world, make the Bible your textbook. . . If it is given this place, God is honored, and He will work for you in the conversion of your children. There is a rich mine of truth and beauty in this Holy Book.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 322

“Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children.” Ministry of Healing, p.222

“Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God’s altar.” Ministry of Healing, p. 393

“Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding” Proverbs 4:1.

We have many admonitions as parents and/or mentors that we stand before our children and young people as representatives of God. The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy explain how important it is to put God first, to live out His word in every aspect of our lives and to show our children what it means to love and fear God. Yet, most of us would agree that we are far too busy in our day to day lives. Our days are full and every hour is filled with activities (many of them good, outreach activities) so by the time we have finished our day we can barely manage to find our beds and fall into them.

In the movie, *Courageous*, written by Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick (brothers) and in the book, *Courageous*, written by Randy Acorn, *The Resolution for Men* which is directed mainly toward fathers; however, we know God is talking to both parents. We are directed to make God first and are urged to be involved in our families. We want them to see us in a relationship with God, so they will want to have a relationship with God and be saved. Randy Acorn, Alex and Stephen Kendrick are taking Fatherhood seriously and invite us to do so, too.

In the movie and book each family has its own troubles and stresses. One dad risks his life to save his baby son and states simply, “it’s my job.” Another dad seeks to find a way to connect with his teenage son while another dad realizes that he has never taken on the responsibility of being a dad, he had just walked away. And yet another dad wants to be the best dad he can be.

The Resolution is shared by the principal character of the movie. This document encourages men to step up and take seriously their roles of fatherhood. By signing The Resolution these men make a public statement to live for what is really important. They promise to be faithful husbands and seek to be an example to their children. The men signing The Resolution want their children to see what a man of God is — they are an example of what a son should strive to be and examples of what daughters should look for in a man.

After the men have studied and prayed together and are ready to sign The Resolution, one wife suggests, “If you are going to do this, do it right—with ceremony and style.” And that is what they do.

The story line prompts fathers to become involved with their children—you come to realize it is never too early, but one day it could be too late.

The movie and book lead us to say, “As for me and my house . . . we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15.

For each of us, may this be our prayer.

Kathleen Sowards is Editorial Assistant of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters.



Gather the Family

Franklin Spring Family Media, DVD

©2011

Reviewed by Kathleen Sowards

In the DVD, *Gather the Family*, the host, Adam Black gives “an invitation to joy” — bringing the family together in worship and entering into God’s glory.

For Early Americans worship was a part of their daily lives—a way of life. For us today there are two main obstacles that prevent families from having worship. One is time— In our society everyone is busy; we are in constant motion and activity. For many the second obstacle is a spiritual matter. Many, especially fathers, do not feel they are equipped and do not know enough to lead the family in worship.

During the course of this DVD several families are interviewed; for all these families worship was a way to stay connected as a family and with God. They repeatedly stated how important consistency was in establishing this tradition and thereby obtaining rich rewards: preparing us for corporate worship, watching our children grow in their relationship with God, bringing peace into the home, finding our days more joyful, and our thoughts more positive – encouraging us through the day and giving us peaceful thoughts for sleep.

The families interviewed spoke about how uncomplicated family worship should be and how important it was to keep worship simple: read the scriptures with a short (20-30 second to 2-3 minute) application (dependent on children’s ages), sing a song, and offer a prayer. They found sometimes reading the scriptures together brought about a brief time of 5-15 minutes spent together and at other times their families might end up spending several hours visiting and sharing together.

Some of the families interviewed would begin their day with family worship. Others ended their day by sitting down together for dinner and family worship. And still others had worship to begin and to end their day. The key, they said is consistency.

One mother said it was a blessing and joy to see her children growing in the knowledge of the Lord, asking questions about what they were reading and getting excited about the scriptures. One teenage son of a single mom spoke about how family worship has helped him in building a Godly character and helping to prepare him for what he will do in the future. Many parents said it was a joy to find their children in the scriptures and overtime to witness the transformation family worship had made in their homes.

The fathers found that by teaching their children the things of God, they were learning the things of God. When fathers answer the call to be the leaders in their families they found the results to bring lifelong love, a well-ordered family, and spouses and children that felt loved and satisfied.

Families found when they spent time memorizing scriptures they would find themselves mulling over the verse(s) and thinking about what they had read that morning. Many times it would be just what was needed to help them throughout the day. These families testify to experiencing more joyful days when they have family worship and begin the day with God and asking for His will to be done in their lives.

Family worship brings families closer together and establishes that God is the priority in the home. It gives parents an opportunity to leave a spiritual legacy to their children and their children's children.

The call to fathers and to mothers is, "Take the first step, you'll be glad you did."

This DVD is an inspiration to families to establish family worship in their homes. Without a doubt, you will also find it to be worth your time in promoting and expanding worship in your home.

Kathleen Sowards is Editorial Assistant of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters.



Eat Together, Live Well Together: Can Sharing Family Meals Make a Difference?

By Gary L. Hopkins, Duane McBride, Shelley Bacon, Daniel D. Saugh, and Julie Weslake

“What’s so great about eating with my family?” asked a 14-year-old high school student while checking his email on an iPad. “That’s something we used to do when I was younger; and besides, it’s for those who have nothing else to do.”

“I rarely eat with my family,” adds a classmate just before answering a call on his cell phone. “I don’t have the time.”

Is this the new trend that confronts us in our fast-paced, high-tech, digital, multitasking society? With increasingly busy schedules and hectic lifestyles, is there anything we can do to get back to the “good ol’ days,” when spending time together as a family at mealtimes was the norm? And is this even worth worrying about?

These and other related questions may frequently flash through our minds, but most of those who are inclined to make changes feel helpless to do so. If parents and other

adults don’t make time to spend with their families, however, the consequences can be huge.

As the saying goes: “The family that eats together, lives well together.” So let’s explore how even family meals can help guard our children’s health, improve their emotional well-being, increase their academic status, reduce their chances of engaging in risky behaviors, and strengthen their walk of faith—even in the twenty-first century.

Mealtime should not be simply an event in which food is prepared and consumed; it should be also an opportunity for discussion and interaction. Delving into a broad range of topics can lead to family conversations that will help to develop quality relationships within the family. In order for this to happen, however, it’s necessary to avoid distractions. So turn off the television and cell phones and put your focus entirely on your children and broader family.

Here are some good reasons for making the move toward meaningful family meals.

Combating Obesity

One study conducted on adolescents indicated that those who watched television during meals were found to have lower intakes of vegetables, calcium-rich food, and grains. They also had higher intakes of soft drinks, compared to adolescents not watching television during meals. They concluded that family meals during adolescence may have a lasting positive influence on dietary quality and meal patterns in your adulthood.¹

Another study on obesity reported that “the family meal setting has the potential to substantially impact the dietary intake of children and may provide an important avenue for obesity prevention. However, opportunities for families to have meals together have been negatively affected by changes in our society, and data suggest that the frequency of family meals may be declining.”²

One such change that affects childhood obesity is the ready and quick access to “fast foods.” The person in the family responsible for buying groceries has to avoid purchasing take-home fast foods (processed foods that can be cooked and prepared quickly). Research has reported that fast foods tend to include frequent servings of potato chips and soda, both of which are associated with obesity among adolescents.³ Given that obesity is a large problem in families living in the developed world, it’s essential that we do all that is possible to avoid foods associated with excessive weight gain.

In research among children and youth attending alternative schools (schools with

curricula designed for students at risk for academic failure, from problematic home environments, or with specialized teaching needs), students who reported never eating family meals were more likely to be overweight, to eat less fruit and fewer breakfasts, and to be more depressed.⁴

Clearly, much scientific data is available that corroborates that family meals are associated with more healthful meals and therefore less obesity. Think about it: obesity is a severe problem, and eating family meals gives you one simple strategy that can have a beneficial effect in preventing it.

Emotional Health and Academic Performance

In the face of such busy family schedules, we should do all we can to ensure that our children enjoy academic success. Can eating meals together help in this area, too?

A program called Project EAT (Eating Among Teens) explored the association between the frequency of family meals and the psychosocial well-being of adolescents.⁵ Data analysis from this research showed that the frequency of family meals was associated with having a higher academic performance. Another study reported similar findings; teens in that study who reported eating with their families were more likely to have higher grades in school and go to college.⁶ In an analysis of research that we [Hopkins and McBride] are conducting at the present time, high school students who are present for at least three family meals per week are nearly twice as likely to get A’s in school.

Barbara Mayfield of Purdue University would agree that family meals improve

students' grades. She reported that "a Reader's Digest survey of more than 2,000 high school seniors compared academic achievement with family characteristics. Eating meals with their family was a stronger predictor of academic success than whether they lived with one or both parents."⁷ Without a doubt, we all want our children to succeed. Doing something as simple as eating meals together has been shown to improve test scores and grades, even when the family situation is less than ideal because of divorce or separation.

Family Meals and High-risk Behaviors Among Adolescents

The issue of risky behaviors is global. No society or culture is exempt from children and youth facing huge behavioral and emotional risks with potentially severe health consequences. Parents are almost universally in agreement: they want to keep their kids away from these dangers, and, fortunately, family meals can assist them in this area, too.

Studies indicate that more than half of teens who don't eat dinner with their parents, have sexual relations by age 15 or 16. This rate decreases to 32 percent when there are family meals in the home. Teens who have meals with their families are also less likely to have suicidal thoughts or suicidal attempts, and are less likely to ever be suspended from school.⁸

Research shows that family meals are associated with less substance abuse. One such study reported the frequency of family meals also was associated with less theft and reduced interest in gang membership.⁹ In another study with similar findings it was reported that family meals were associated with a lower

likelihood of tobacco and alcohol use.¹⁰ Parents should be encouraged by these findings because they point out that there are indeed things they can do to help protect their children from risk.

We all can benefit by learning how to talk to our kids, especially at mealtime. "This year's CASA study (from Columbia University) demonstrates that the magic that happens at family dinners isn't the food on the table, but the conversations around it."¹¹ Family dinners relate to family bonding, which relates to significantly higher rates of pro-social behavior and lower rates of all types of risk behavior."

Faith at the Table

Children begin to form their image of God at an early age based on their experiences and relationships with parents and other significant adults in their lives. They observe and are affected by how these adults live out their relationship with God. Marjorie Thompson, author of *Family: The Forming Center*, says that "the way we relate to each other is the most important spiritual discipline in the life of a family."¹² Research by the Search Institute confirms that the most significant religious influence on children is not what happens at church, but what happens at home.¹³

Eating together provides a time for bonding, stimulating discussion, and faith talk. Deuteronomy 6 says that if we want to pass on faith, we'll be more intentional and deliberate about creating rhythms in our homes and talking about our faith. The simple event of sitting at home and having a meal together becomes an important time when beliefs and values are both developed and practiced.

So do it—eat with your kids!

- ¹Shira Feldman, Marla E. Eisenberg, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, and Mary Story, "Associations Between Watching TV During Family Meals and Dietary Intake Among Adolescents," *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 39, no. 5 (September/October 2010): 257-263.
- ²Jayne A. Fulkerson, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Peter J. Hannan, and Mary Story, "Family Meal Frequency and Weight Status Among Adolescents: Cross-sectional and Five-year Longitudinal Associations," *Obesity* 16, no. 11 (August 2008): 2529-2534.
- ³Kerri N. Boutelle, Jayne A. Fulkerson, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Mary Story, and Simone A. French, "Fast Food for Family Meals: Relationships With Parent and Adolescent Food Intake, Home Food Availability, and Weight Status," *Public Health and Nutrition* 10:16-23.
- ⁴Jayne A. Fulerson, Martha Y. Kubik, Mary Story, Leslie Lytle, and Chrisa Arcan, "Are There Nutritional and Other Benefits Associated With Family Meals Among At Risk Youth?" *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45, no. 4 (October 2009): 389-395.
- ⁵Marla E. Eisenberg, Rachel E. Olson, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Mary Story, and Linda H. Bearinger, "Correlations Between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-being Among Adolescents," *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 158, no. 8 (August 2004): 792-796.
- ⁶Council of Economic Advisers, "Teens and Their Parents in the Twenty-first Century: An Examination of Trends in Teen Behavior and the Role of Parental Involvement," accessed Nov. 18, 2010, and available at http://clinton3.nara.gov/WH/EOP/CEA/html/Teens_Paper_Final.pdf.
- ⁷Barbara J. Mayfield, "Family Meals Fact Sheet," accessed Nov. 18, 2010, and available at www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/HumanServices/PublicHealth/SchoolHealth/file65896.pdf.
- ⁸Council of Economic Advisers, "Teens and Their Parents in the Twenty-first Century: An Examination of Trends in Teen Behavior and the Role of Parental Involvement," accessed Nov. 18, 2010, and available at http://clinton3.nara.gov/WH/EOP/CEA/html/Teens_Paper_Final.pdf.
- ⁹Bisakha Sen, "The Relationship Between Frequency of Family Dinner and Adolescent Problem Behaviors After Adjusting for Other Family Characteristics," *Journal of Adolescence* 33, no. 1 (February 2010): 187-196.
- ¹⁰James White and Emma Halliwell, "Alcohol and Tobacco Use During Adolescence: The Importance of the Family Mealtime Environment," *Journal of Health Psychology* 15, no. 4 (May 2010): 526-532.
- ¹¹National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "The Importance of Family Dinners VI," Sept. 22, 2010, accessed Nov. 18, 2010, and available at www.casacolumbia.org/templates/PressReleases.aspx?articleid=606&zoneid=79.
- ¹²Majorie J. Thompson, *Family the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Upper Room Publishing, 2010), p. 59.
- ¹³Search Institute, "Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations" (1990).

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From Hopkins, G. L., McBride, D., Bacon, S., Saugh, D. D., and Weslake, J. (2011, October 27). *Review and Herald* 180 (30) p. 19-21. Used by permission.



The Ministerial Family: Balancing Church and Family Life

By Pamela Consuegra

(This article was originally written for the pastor's family; however, we, the editors believe it has great relevance for anyone involved in ministry.)

Let us begin by taking a quiz.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. Pastoral families usually protect their personal and family lives
2. The expectations of church members often impinge upon a pastor's family and home life.
3. A significant dimension to pastoral ministry is the modeling of healthy family relations.
4. A pastor and/or the pastor's spouse should be available whenever he or she is called upon by a church member.
5. Pastors who turn off their cell phones or home phones in order to spend time with their families deny their church members access, which they have a right to expect.

6. Pastors and their spouses often get so involved with helping others that there is no time left for their own families.

The Pastor's Family

What do Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White have to say about our responsibilities to our families?

"If anyone does not take care of his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, ISV).

"Exploit or abuse your family, and end up with a fistful of air" (Proverbs 11:29, *The Message*).

"There is no more important missionary field than our own home" (White, 1954, p. 476).

Rank the following list according to how your family currently prioritizes things:

1. Work with church and church members
2. Family
3. God

As a pastor, do you make a distinction between God and work? This becomes a difficult question when your work includes service to God. Too often we lump service to the church together with service to God when they need to be kept distinct, even separate. They are not the same. Our responsibilities to God should always take top priority over our obligations to the church.

But where do our obligations to our families come in? Do we meet the needs of our church members at the expense of our own families? If so, we are making a big mistake. In order to avoid this, the minister and his or her family must find the right balance between church and home life. What follows are eight principles to help you best prioritize your family in your life.

1. Balance the urgent with the important

Consider the following depiction of things that demand your attention and decide under which heading you operate most of the time.

- a: *Nonurgent and Unimportant*: Here we find the pastoral demands of the trivial, unimportant, inconsequential, irrelevant – or what we might call the junk mail – which some have difficulty escaping from.
- b: *Urgent but Unimportant*: This is the area that demands most of our time. These things seem urgent but are often unimportant in the overall scheme of things.

c: *Urgent and Important*: This may seem like the best place in which to operate; however, in this setting, you are in crisis mode. Who wants to be putting out fires every day? There must be a better way.

d: *Nonurgent but Important*: This is actually the best quadrant in which to minister. Deal with the important before the important becomes urgent. The best way to get into this quadrant is to plan, organize, and prioritize. Learning to operate here saves time that you can then give to your family.

2. Let others hold you accountable and help you

You may need some outside help to review how you are using your time. Talk to your local conference ministerial secretary and seek guidance and counsel.

Keep a journal for a 30-day period and review it. How do you spend most of your time? Have a mentor review the journal with you and give you feedback. You may need someone else to “give you permission” to take some time off.

Eliminate things that are not necessary. March to the mission that Jesus called you to do, not to the mission that others want you to do for them.

Involve the local church board and staff in your decision to make your family a priority. This does not mean that you ask their permission for time off; rather, it means that they are informed and involved in the process. Your church members should then be informed. Remember, your family can be a role model for other families in the church regarding this important topic.

Make sure that roles, expectations, and expectations of all your church officers are clearly defined. If it is not your job, cut it out of your schedule! Let other church leaders do their jobs, and you do yours. Do not take someone else's ministry away from them. Every pastor needs to add one item to their current job description: *commitment to my own family.*

3. Set limits on time for regular church office/work time

What is a reasonable amount of time for staff development, to sit on committees, to meet with church members, sermon preparation, and other items? In one survey of lay people, the answers to this question averaged 82 hours per week – an incredibly great amount of time. One church member even proposed that the pastor may work 200 hours per week.

There will be those special events or times, such as during an evangelistic series, when you may have no choice but to work many hours. But at the end, reward yourself and your family with some special alone time together. This will give you all a treat to look forward to as you dedicate yourself to ministry at those particular times.

4. Guard and protect boundaries

Set and lovingly communicate parameters to your church family in order to protect your private family time, and encourage them to do the same. A good minister will always respond to legitimate emergencies, but it is important to define an emergency. Be candid with your church about how they can expect you to respond to various crises. What is an emergency? What is a crisis? Defining these terms ahead of time will help you identify those instances that may, or may not, need immediate attention. Some “emergencies” can, in

fact, wait. Your clearly communicated responses will diffuse misunderstandings before they develop and often prevent the manipulation of your time. Establish a day off each week and make sure that all your church family is aware of what time has been set aside.

Guarding your boundaries requires action. Put your computer and phone aside when you are with your spouse or children. You do not have to answer every call immediately. Preserve your family meal times. Eating together as a family is an important time to talk and share about the day's happenings, challenges, joys, and tomorrow's events.

5. A regular schedule makes crises easier to bear

If you have a regular day off with your family and take time to give them a place of importance in your schedule, then when a real crisis arises that takes you away, these kinds of events will be easier to bear.

6. Mentor others

Delegate as much as possible to other church leaders. Trust and train them to do the job that the nominating committee has elected them to do. Allow them to serve. Do not take service opportunities away from your church members because you feel you can do it better or faster. Help out the church family and yourself by sharing in ministry.

If you are too busy, you are probably not delegating. Train and trust people to coordinate and lead programs and events. Investing time in the training of others will not only save you hours, but fulfill the scriptural guidance offered in Ephesians 4:11, 12: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and

teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (NIV).

7. Schedule family time in your calendars now

Schedule your vacation early in the year. Many of our ministerial families lose vacation time because they are too busy to take it. There may never be a "good time" but this must be a priority.

Schedule one night every week with your spouse, a kind of "date night." When God created Adam, He said it was not good for him to be alone. So He gave Adam a wife, not a whole church family.

Here is a formula that may be good to adopt: Spend at least 30 minutes each evening together, one entire evening each week, one day each month, and one weekend each quarter.

Schedule one evening with the entire family. Remember to make each child feel special. Try to schedule time with each child alone. When you are traveling, remember to call home and speak to your spouse and to each child.

One minister offers his family his daily planner to have first choice for them to fill in the time they want with him. He sacredly guards the time they have agreed

on, even declining to chair important meetings. He tells a story of a church board member spotting his car near the beach and seeing him playing on the beach with his kids when he had previously told him that he was not available to meet. This experience gave the minister an opportunity to testify to his own family and the church of the importance of making his family a priority.

8. Take time for yourself

Take time for yourself to renew and recommit your relationship to God. As a spiritual leader, you must take time to grow spiritually.

Get needed rest each night. You will be profitable for no one if you are not mindful that your body needs rest and renewal through sleep.

Our families are our most important treasures and God-given gifts on this earth. How sad it will be when we get to heaven if our

family members are missing. We must begin today to make them a priority so that we can spend eternity together.

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From Consuegra, P., (2011, November). *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*. 83 (11) p. 6-8. Used by permission.



Don't Give Up

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

Q – We are truly concerned about the behavior of our children these days. We have two children; a girl (16) and a boy (14). We know the teen years are usually more challenging than the earlier years. However, it appears that teenagers are just getting way more difficult than they have ever been. Is it something we are doing wrong? Please help us understand what is going on. We really love our children, but their recent bad behavior is way more than we signed on for.

Derek and Kathy—Winter Park, Florida

A – Parenting is one of the most challenging, satisfying, and important jobs on earth. At best, children are a work in progress (so are adults) that fill us with pride as they develop each day in front of our eyes. At worst, children can be the most mental health testing reality of our existences.

The ideal is to raise children to be independent enough to eventually take care of themselves, while connected enough to look to their respective families for guidance and support. The best case scenario is for children to have a balance—neither complete independence nor complete dependence—but an ideal reality called interdependence.

Most people who become parents are not really prepared for the shock their lives will experience with this new situation. No one should have to go through this life-altering experience without being in a committed marriage partnership. Once you have children, it affects every aspect of your life; your time, activities, priorities, hobbies, career, education, and friends. All take a back seat to the new life you are now responsible for.

Without knowing, we often take short cuts in the process of raising our children because we didn't realize it was going to be so demanding. We spend less time with them than they need. We convince ourselves we love all our children the same—after all

we give them all the same things—while they are different individuals with different needs, who will respond differently to the same treatment.

More often than not most parents don't get training to be excellent parents; rather, they default to the way they were parented, without realizing what worked for them is not working for their child who may have a completely different personality and temperament than they.

The more training in good parenting we have, the more aware we will be of what our individual children need, and will give us an opportunity to give the effort of parenting the best attention, and probably get the best results.

There is at least one other thing parents of difficult children can do to advantage themselves; choose a positive attitude to deal with their children. The Word of God states in Proverbs 15:13: "A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."

We hope that *from this day forward*, you will trust God to save your family, and by so doing feel healthier, happier, and at peace with God's promise to supply whatever you may need (Philippians 4:19). We will continue to pray for you.

Willie and Elaine Oliver are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters .

All Bible texts are from the NKJV.

From Oliver, W. and Oliver, E. (2012, July/August). Message 78 (4) p. 6. Use by permission.



Let Go and Let God

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

Q – The week of August 22, 2011 was an alarming one for my family and me. First, an earthquake took place in the middle of the day. This is not California, where people expect that sort of thing. Then, we had to evacuate our home later in the week because of hurricane Irene coming up the East Coast. These are really frightening times, especially when you have a young family. What can my husband and I do to calm our fears and that of our children?

Diane—Fenwick Island, Delaware

A – Peace is one of the most important commodities in life today. We all need to have a sense of security, in order to feel good about what is going on in our lives, and be most productive. Words often used to describe this reality are equilibrium and homeostasis.

Negotiating life in families is one of the most challenging ventures any human being can undertake. The notion of keeping a family together—husbands and wives getting along, and children staying focused on being productive in school and playing nice—is a huge accomplishment for anyone.

So when you throw into the mix unpredictable forces in nature we have no

control over, like earthquakes and hurricanes, life can become really stressful and traumatic. We believe this is probably what you and your family experienced last August. To be sure, you had plenty of company in your part of the country, and also around the world. Like you, we experienced both of the events you described above, and felt some of the anxiety you have shared.

One of the most important realities to remember when dealing with unpredictable circumstances in life is to

have a place you can go, mentally, to find peace for yourself and for your loved ones. Beyond employing psychological skills you

can learn to keep yourself calm—like changing the conversation you have with yourself—these kinds of circumstances are best handled by having a working faith in God.

The truth is passing on a spiritual legacy of faith in God is one of the greatest gifts we can share with our children and family members. In a world where economic uncertainty is rampant, and world peace illusive, our families are in dire need of the kind of safety that is only found in Jesus.

The Bible is God’s love letter to the human race. In the book of Philippians 4:6-7, the apostle Paul reminds us: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all

understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” And in Isaiah 26:3, there is another wonderful promise that states: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”

We have learned for quite some time now that life in this world will always be unpredictable. However, we have found security and peace for ourselves, our family, and friends, by trusting in God who always keeps His promises.

We hope that *from this day forward*, you and your family will find the peace and security you need by using your faith on purpose and trusting God to take care of you no matter what natural calamity is heading your way.

Willie and Elaine Oliver are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters .

All Bible texts are from the NKJV.

From Oliver, W. and Oliver, E. (2012, March/April). Message 78 (2) p. 6. Used by permission.



Appendix A

Family Ministries Implementation

Policy and Purpose Statement

The Family Ministries Leader

What is a Family?

Committee and Planning Guidelines

A Good Presentation Will Do Four Things

The Ten Commandments of Presentations

Family Ministries Interest Survey

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 _____ 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*

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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.

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

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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?

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Family Ministries Interest Survey

We don't need your name, but the following information will be helpful to our family ministries plans.

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

Gender: M F

The family ministries committee of your church is considering its plans for our church family. We would like you to help us by letting us know what would be of greatest interest to you. Please indicate the top five areas that interest you. Rank them from one to five-one being your first choice.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication in marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Dating relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Sibling rivalry | <input type="checkbox"/> Relating to parents – for teens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage Enrichment | <input type="checkbox"/> Grief and loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Step-parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Family finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing for marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relating to teens | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality in marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce recovery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict management | <input type="checkbox"/> Children and divorce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childbirth preparation | <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Mid-life transitions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex education | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-career family | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for aging parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sabbath activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Abuse in the family | <input type="checkbox"/> Making peace with your past |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning for retirement | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith development in family |

1. Are you a parent? Yes No

Age of children: 0-5 _____

Number of children _____

6-10 _____

Number living at home _____

11-13 _____

Do you have foster children? _____

14-17 _____

Do you have step-children? _____

18 + _____

2. Marital Status

Never Married

Married

Separated

Divorced

Widowed

Divorced--Remarried

Widowed--Remarried

Engaged

