

BUC FAMILY

A Publication of the BUC Family, Children and Possibility Ministries

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When a House is Not a Home

Pr Les Ackie

Scripture tells us that true faith is not only proclaimed but also practised. Among all the places where our faith should shine most clearly, none is more revealing than the home. The most natural first recipients of our spirituality should be those in our families. It is in the daily interactions with those closest to us—our spouse, children, parents, and siblings—that the authenticity of our spirituality is tested and proven.

It is by God's design that the family is the primary mechanism through which His values are to be transmitted from one generation to another, so that He might remain 'known'. It is therefore no surprise that the forces of evil combine to undermine the integrity of the family unit. We are informed that "It is Satan's studied effort to pervert the marriage institution, to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness" and that "the spirit governing in the home will be brought into the church" (PP, 338, The Upward Look, 164). As goes the family, so goes the church. Toxicity in the home will inevitably contaminate the community of faith.

Like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, we can deceive ourselves into thinking that our standing with God is determined by the outward-facing activities that capture the scrutiny of the public gaze. However, if the home life is

in turmoil, public performance can be used to paper over the cracks of a family life destitute of sacrificial love, affection and commitment. Ellen White makes the sobering comment that, "A religion of externals is attractive to the unrenewed heart," (The Great Controversy, 88). Those who disregard their family obligations can maintain a façade of godliness that denies the power of agape love, in the hope that their public performance will secure their salvation.

The human heart has an amazing capacity for self-justification. Still, Mrs White strips away the mask of self-delusion when she states that, "Men and women, children and youth, are measured in the scales of heaven in accordance with that which they reveal in their home life" (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol 5, 1085).

As a young pastor, I was told in no uncertain terms, "I don't care how many sermons you preach, how many Bible studies you give, how many people you baptise. If you are not looking after your wife and children right, you are not doing God's will."



That counsel echoed D. L. Moody's comment, "If I wanted to find out whether a man was a Christian, I wouldn't go to his minister; I would go and ask his wife. We need more Christian life at home. If a man doesn't treat his wife right, I don't want to hear him talk about Christianity."

CHRIST is the HEAD
of this house
THE UNSEEN GUEST
at every meal
THE SILENT LISTENER
to every conversation

When we dishonour our families, we are dishonouring God. It might be a good investment for the church to buy a plaque for every family in the church that displays the well-known words, "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation." There is a direct correlation between our experience of God and how we treat each other. The failure to fulfil our obligations to our families is a spiritual failure. When we lose sight of God's place in our lives, we lose sight of our obligations toward one another. That's why we read in 1 John 4:20-1, "If someone says, 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." We cannot be a 'saint abroad and a devil at home'.

The Apostle Paul does not mince his words when he declared, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). Regardless of the positions we hold, the deeds we do or the reputation we enjoy, in God's eyes those who neglect their families are considered to be 'faithless, disbelieving infidels.' While the context of Paul's admonition is the provision of the amenities necessary for physical survival, his words have just as much application for the spiritual, emotional and psychological needs of family members. If we claim to follow Christ yet fail to love sacrificially within our own home, we contradict the very essence of the gospel we profess. Our faith is tested more at the dinner table than it is in the pews. It is revealed more in our private patience than our public prayers. It shows more in how we speak to our spouse or children, when we are tired, frustrated, or disappointed, than in how we talk to strangers. Healthy relationships can only flourish when genuinely spiritual people operate by genuinely spiritual principles. Scripture consistently teaches that genuine spirituality is relational. The greatest commandments are to love God and to love others (Matthew 22:37-39). The operation of the Holy Spirit in the life is displayed to those within their homes through the practice of love evidenced by "joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Our homes are the mirrors that reveal who we truly are. In our homes, the masks come off. Those who know us best see us at our worst. That is why the home is both the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity for spiritual growth. Every conflict becomes a chance to practise forgiveness. Every disappointment becomes an opportunity to show grace. Every act of service—washing dishes, comforting a crying child, or caring for an ageing parent—becomes a sacred expression of love for God. Faithfulness to our families does not require perfection. We will constantly fall short of the ideal. However, our fallibility is mitigated by our commitment to a self-sacrificial love that elevates the needs of our families above the gratification of our baser instincts. Fixing our gaze on Jesus as the standard of love will disabuse us of the delusion that we can faithfully serve him while at the same time violating our covenant to love our spouses. We cannot compartmentalise our worship of God from our treatment of the precious ones he placed within our care.

When our homes become havens of love, grace, and forgiveness, they bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel. God loves through us so that our houses not only become our homes, but also become a little piece of heaven on earth.





Renewed Marriage Enrichment Retreat 2025 - “Rekindle the Love”

3-5 October 2025, Staverton Park Hotel & Golf Club, Daventry

Over forty-five married couples gathered at the serene Staverton Park Hotel in Daventry for the first joint North England Conference (NEC) and South England Conference (SEC) Marriage Enrichment Retreat, organised by Pastors John Francis, NEC Family Life director and Rio Espulgar, SEC Family and Children’s director. The theme for the weekend, “Rekindle the Love,” invited couples to pause, reflect, and intentionally invest in strengthening their marital bond.

Guest speakers Drs Robert and Denise Davis guided attendees through key biblical and psychological principles designed to build stronger marriages. The central aim of the retreat was, “To develop a clear vision of the type of person you desire to be and the type of relationships you desire to have.”

Friday evening’s session focused on Emotional Maturity, with Dr Denise Davis highlighting that emotional growth is, “A solo venture that you take together.” Dr Robert Davis reflected on the spiritual and emotional maturity demonstrated by Jesus:

- Jesus’ family was emotionally mature (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38)
- Jesus’ clear life vision (Luke 19:10)
- Jesus’ guiding principles (Matthew 5:1-9)
- Jesus’ application of principles in real life (Matthew 5:21-47)
- Jesus’ unwavering commitment to His principles (Matthew 5:48)

Dr Davis cautioned that, often we institutionalise the church with a list of rules and policies, forgetting about the Jesus we are meant to follow and be guided by.

Sabbath morning’s session delved into Strategies for Managing Relationships, focusing on “Rewiring Your Brain for Love.” Couples engaged in heartfelt discussions about personal growth, struggles, and traits they wished to improve.

Dr Robert Davis outlined five common relational response patterns:

1. Conflict - direct confrontation or argument
2. Triology - venting to a third party about your spouse
3. Distancing - withdrawing emotionally or physically
4. Pursuing - attempting to defuse tension by chasing resolution
5. Cut-off - severing ties completely, as in divorce or emotional isolation



Understanding these tendencies, helps individuals develop self-awareness and move from instinctual reaction to intentional response.

Couples were encouraged to write personal and family mission statements to guide their growth and hold each other accountable.



“My mission is to represent Yeshua and to do my part to make this world a better place by producing justice, and to bring my absolute best self into all relationships.” - Dr Robert Davis:

“My mission is to faithfully serve God with all humility and respect so that it is reflected in all aspects of my life and relationships, allowing the beauty of Christ to be seen in me always.” - Mrs Orlene Dunkley-Lawrence:

Participants engaged in open dialogue around challenging topics such as the impact of childhood, family dynamics, intimacy and coping mechanisms like overwork or substance abuse.

One attendee shared, “I was raised in the foster system. This retreat is helping me to recalibrate myself going forward.”

Dr Davis beautifully summarised, “By their fruit you shall know them, but by their root you understand them.”

Saturday evening’s banquet was a joyful highlight. Couples enjoyed a sumptuous three-course meal, games, laughter and fellowship. The evening celebrated the renewed sense of love and togetherness among the couples.

The final session explored the theme “How Working in Our Family Saves Our Marriage.” Drs Robert and Denise Davis emphasised that addressing issues within one’s family of origin plays a crucial role in relationship health. Working on yourself within your family makes the biggest difference in your maturity level.



Couples also examined child-parent dynamics, gaining practical tools for handling challenging family situations with grace and understanding.

The presenters concluded by revisiting the Five Principles of Emotional Maturity:

- Feel deeply without being ruled by emotions
- Endure others’ discomfort without rushing to fix it
- See beyond others’ actions to understand relational dynamics
 - Stay connected to difficult people and those with differing views
 - Maintain guiding principles rooted in conviction, not reaction

Connected
devotional readings
for an intimate marriage



Willie and Elaine Oliver

Music and worship were integral throughout the weekend with inspiring devotionals and praise sessions. Pastor John Francis and his wife Delivon, led devotionals from *Connected: Devotional Readings for an Intimate Marriage* by Pastor Willie and Dr Elaine Oliver.

The retreat closed with a touching Commitment Service, where couples renewed their vows and reaffirmed their dedication to God and each other.

It was a weekend of reflection, laughter, learning, and above all — love rekindled.



**SEC CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES
WEEK OF PRAYER 2025**



I WILL GO...

TELL SOMEONE ABOUT JESUS





**PR. NICOLE
GOODEN**



**PR. STANLEY
TEIXEIRA**



**PR. ANDREW
LAYLAND**



**PR. NERINE
BARRETT**



**PR. ANDREW
CUDJOE**



**PR. RIO ESPULGAR
HOST**

**NOVEMBER 3-7
MONDAY-FRIDAY
6-7 PM**





[https://www.youtube.com/
@KidsPlanetSEC/streams](https://www.youtube.com/@KidsPlanetSEC/streams)

**Zoom ID
893 2396 7663
PW: 015387**

<https://tinyurl.com/CM-Week-of-Prayer>



SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES

ANCHORED IN HOPE

WIDOW, WIDOWERS, AND FAMILIES DAY OF FELLOWSHIP

SABBATH, 6 DECEMBER 2025





Dr. Rio Espulgar



Thembie Mapingire



Dr. Augustus Lawrence

VENUE:
JEWS' FREE SCHOOL
THE MALL, HARROW HA3 9TE
10 AM

REGISTER

[https://
tinyurl.com/
285yybkt](https://tinyurl.com/285yybkt)



LIVESTREAM




Spiritual Parenting in Pressured Times

Opportunities, Obstacles and Sacrifices

"Is my son going to be a victim of my better life?"

MAGGIE TOLAND



MONDAY
NOVEMBER 17TH



6:00 PM - LONDON
7:00 PM - BUDAPEST
8:00 PM - BUCHAREST

Meeting ID: 882 7275 0145
Passcode: family




YOU ARE NOT ALONE

CCS is here for you

CONTACT
0330 133 2495
Dedicated listening line
0207 723 8050
Office Number / Appointments
connect@ccscounselling.org.uk
www.ccscounselling.org.uk

**"I am not living,
I am just surviving."
Together we can make
it happen.**

Often, it is not the initial experience that creates the overwhelming pain, but the lack of support.

Do not suffer alone
Do not suffer in silence
CCS is here to support you
Together we can win your struggle.



Facing Difficult times or issues, Need to talk?



The first step is the hardest. Call the NEC Counselling Service Today!

07539 211 442

We can arrange for you to access support.

FORWARD
We Go!

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Seventh-day
Adventist Church

STRONG
FAMILY MINISTRIES • FAMILIES • CHILDREN
MISSION



Adventist
Family Ministries

2026 RESOURCE BOOK

FAMILY, FAITH, AND FOCUS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER



The Seventh-day Adventist Church values every human being as part of God's creation. We are committed to safeguarding all children and adults at risk who take part in our services and activities.

Safeguarding Policy Statement

The Seventh-day Adventist Church commits to:

- Promote a safe environment for children and adults at risk of harm
- Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Provide compassionate care and support for survivors of abuse
- Ensure that those working with children and adults at risk are trained and supported
- Raise awareness of safeguarding responsibilities throughout all church programming and provisions
- Work collaboratively with safeguarding agencies
- Follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised best practice in order to protect the vulnerable
- Implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures outlined in our safeguarding policy



Safeguarding is Everybody's Responsibility

[Click here to download safeguarding posters for your local church](#)

Useful Links

[AdventSource](#)

[Adventist Possibility Ministries](#)

[Adventist Single Adult Ministries \(ASAM\)](#)

[Adventist Special Needs Association \(ASNA\)](#)

[BUC Family Ministries](#)

[BUC Safeguarding](#)

[Care for the Family](#)

[GC Children's Ministries](#)

[GC Family Ministries](#)

[In Discipleship](#)

[Prepare Enrich](#)

[TED Children's Ministries](#)

[TED Family Ministries](#)

[TED Possiblity Ministries](#)

[Through the Roof \(Disability outreach\)](#)

[Women's Aid](#)

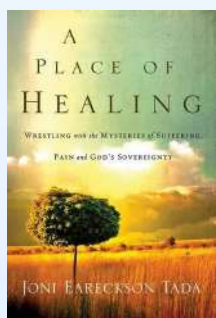
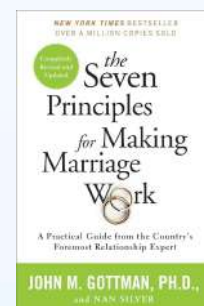
Recommended Reading



In *Don't Follow Your Heart*, Thaddeus Williams debunks the 'ten commandments of self-worship, exploring why chasing after expressive individualism, experiences, and desires always fails to deliver on its promise of happiness. Williams points us to a life beyond self-defeating dogmas to Someone infinitely more interesting, satisfying, and awesome than ourselves.

Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work.

John Gottman helps couples focus on paying attention to the small day-to-day moments that make up the heart and soul of any relationship. He provides spouses with a solid foundation for resolving conflict and find strategies for living with those issues that cannot be resolved. This book is a definitive guide for anyone who wants their relationship to attain its highest potential.



A Place of Healing. In this eloquent account of her current struggle with physical pain, Joni Eareckson Tada offers her perspective on divine healing, God's purposes, and what it means to live with joy. Over four decades ago, a diving accident left Joni a quadriplegic. Today, she faces a new battle: unrelenting pain. The ongoing urgency of this season in her life has caused Joni to return to foundational questions about suffering and God's will.

BUC Family, Children, Possibility Ministries & Safeguarding



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