



REVIVAL & REFORMATION

**FAMILIES  
REACHING  
UP**



A Department of Family Ministries publication

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*Families Reaching Families*  
*Empowering Families for Growth & Change*  
*Making Families Whole*  
*Family Seasons*  
*Peace & Healing: Making Homes Abuse-free*  
*Families Filled with Joy*  
*Facing Family Crises: Supporting One Another with Love*  
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*Becoming Family*  
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## Preface

During the last several months we have visited Family Ministries church leaders and members on every continent in the world. Beyond the mundane reality of ever-present jet lag; and experiencing different foods, diverse languages, different cultures, dissimilar temperatures, different weather patterns, and a number of new sensations—a few more pleasant than others—what has been similar everywhere, however, is people's desperate need for God.

Married or single; young or old; male or female; divorced or widowed; new believer or veteran member; with children or without them; African or Asian; from the Americas or Europe; from the Middle East or the South Pacific; we all need Jesus to intersect our lives, and give us peace, companionship and assurance He will supply all our needs.

The hurried pace of twenty-first-century living has left us gasping to catch our collective breaths. And to this dilemma we add with mounting alarm, the proliferation of media in developed and developing countries, including among very young children.

When our children were little, it was relatively easy for us to have family worship every day. No sooner did Jessica and Julian begin school, Adventurers, and a host of other childhood activities we are so prone to be consumed by in developed countries, our family worship all but vanished. The acknowledgment of this reality prompted us to call a family meeting to deal with this untenable situation.

In spite of the very difficult and less than pleasant options before us, we decided to simply get up earlier in order to include time with God, as a family, at the beginning of each day. It was very difficult at first. However, putting family worship back in our daily schedules fortified our relationship with God, and for sure, with each other.

Our theme for this resource is *Revival and Reformation: Families Reaching Up!* It is impossible to cultivate a viable relationship with God without making time to communicate with Him every day.

In Jeremiah 29:13 God declares: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." On the same note, Ellen White declares: "Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this *your very first work*" (Steps to Christ, p. 70). The truth is: "Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly—by abiding in Him—that we are to grow in grace.

He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always” (Steps to Christ, p. 69).

We hope the sermons, workshops, stories, leadership resources and reprinted articles in this volume, will help families to sense the urgency of needing to *reach up*, and make the necessary connection with the Lord each day.

For stronger and healthier families,

Willie and Elaine Oliver, Directors  
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## *How to Use This Planbook*

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

### ***Christian Home and Marriage Week: February 11-18***

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 11, (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 18, (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 2-8***

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 8, (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

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.

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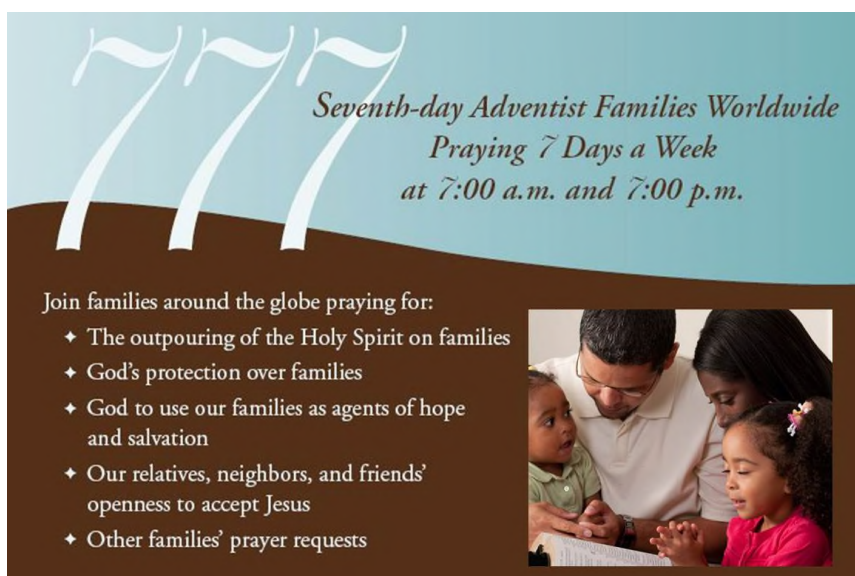
## Introduction

Family and relationships are central to God's plan. The family was established by God at creation as a fundamental human institution. It is the primary setting in which values are learned and the capacity for close relationships with God and with other human beings is developed.

God cares about families and wants to bless our families abundantly. Staying connected with God is essential if we are to fully experience God's blessings on our families. "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." *Philippians 4:6,7*

*The theme of "Reaching Up" is all about connecting with God through prayer. Families are encouraged to reach up to God through personal devotion and bible study, family worship, and participating in the "777" prayer initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When we pray, miracles happen, and our families are revived and transformed.*

*Family ministries leaders are asked to encourage their respective church families to join other families around the world in praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on their own and other families. Families will experience true revival, which is **about a new experience with Jesus**, and be witnesses to what He can do in our personal lives, in our marriages and with our children.*



*Seventh-day Adventist Families Worldwide  
Praying 7 Days a Week  
at 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.*

Join families around the globe praying for:

- ✦ The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on families
- ✦ God's protection over families
- ✦ God to use our families as agents of hope and salvation
- ✦ Our relatives, neighbors, and friends' openness to accept Jesus
- ✦ Other families' prayer requests

For more information and resources on the worldwide prayer chain, go to [family.adventist.org](http://family.adventist.org)

# *Miracles in Marriage*

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

**The Text: John 2:1-10**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Marriage was the first institution established by God at creation. At the end of that day, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31).

In spite of being the first institution established by God at creation, and declared to be very good by the God of the universe, marriage is difficult. To be sure, everything God asks us to do is difficult, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Most married couples who have a relatively good marriage enjoy having fun. However, their idea of how to have fun is not always the same. One wants to eat rice and beans and kelewele (fried plantains from Ghana), while the other wants to eat spaghetti. One wants to vacation in the mountains, while the other wants to vacation at the beach. One wants to go for a Sabbath afternoon hike, while the other wants to take a nap. One wants to have three children, while the other wants to have no children. One must make it to church on time each Sabbath, while the other simply cannot be on time.

With all this challenge at hand, who can truly have a happy marriage? Did God make a mistake? Is marriage simply too difficult for fallen human beings?

Today we will speak about realities in marriage and other relationships many of us are familiar with. We will also share how we can depend on God to go the distance; by learning how to be patient, kind, understanding, and forgiving; allowing God’s presence to work miracles in our respective marriages every single day. Our topic today is: Miracles in Marriage.

**THE TEXT: John 2:1-10**

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. And when

they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, “Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.” And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!”

In the book of Genesis, God is portrayed as speaking the world into reality. God speaks the word and things come to fruition: the sky, the earth, the seas and the streams; plants and pastures, birds and fish, animals and humans. Everything, seen and unseen, are called into being by God’s spoken word.

An intentional equivalent to the opening words of Genesis, the book of John presents God as speaking salvation into existence. This time God’s word takes on human form and walks into history in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks the word and outstanding realities appear: forgiveness and judgment, healing and enlightenment, kindness and grace, happiness and love, freedom and restoration. Everything ruined and fallen, evil and unclean, are called to salvation by the spoken word of God.

For, somewhere down the line things went very wrong and are in serious need of repair (Genesis tells that story too). The repairing is all realized by the Word—the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus, in this story, not only utters the word of God; He is the Word of God.

By remaining in the presence of these words, we begin to realize that our words are more meaningful than we ever recognized them to be. Declaring “I believe,” for example, is the difference between life and death. Our words gain worth and significance in conversations with Jesus. For Jesus does not enforce salvation; rather, He brings salvation through unhurried conversation, intimate relationships, grace-filled answers, fervent prayer, and—collectively—through His sacrificial death on the cross. We do not hastily walk away from words like these. And for our teaching today, the Word is found in the middle of a wedding celebration in the second chapter of the book of John. (*The Message*. 2002. NavPress).

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, stood on the banks of the Jordan preaching and baptizing in chapter one. When he saw Jesus coming towards him, he stopped and shouted: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)! This recognition near the river, gets Jesus a few disciples who follow Him back to Galilee, to the scene of His first miracle.

This Word comes in the person of Jesus, who comes to live among humans and to experience their lives so they can experience His salvation. He is God in the flesh, Emmanuel, at a wedding in Cana, with his new disciples—one of them Nathanael, is actually from Cana (John 21:2). Perhaps Jesus takes him back home that he may be used to help bring salvation to his family.

Cana was about three days’ journey from the Jordan and very close to Nazareth, where Mary the mother of Jesus lived. Scholars suggest the wedding was probably of a relative of Mary’s and the reason Jesus was invited, since His public ministry was just getting started and He was still virtually unknown.

Wedding feasts in the near-east often lasted seven days, placing quite a financial strain on the one providing food and drink. When the supply of wine ran out—apparently these relatives were quite poor—Mary got involved to try to save face for the family by calling on Jesus. Jesus had up to this time performed no miracles. But, Mary must have known, in the face of this impossibility, the promised Messiah was her only hope of helping to solve the embarrassing dilemma.

Taking this opportunity to let his mother know he was no longer a boy, or under the domain of her impulses; more than that, wanting to signal His life was now solely at the disposition and directives of God the Father, Jesus replies: “Woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” Now, NT scholars assure the modern reader this language is in no way disrespectful to Mary, rather offer it as a very common polite communication between mother and grown son; while the statement: “what does your concern have to do with me?” was a common expression in Greek to convey a previous relationship between two individuals had evolved to a brand new level.

What is very important in this often misunderstood conversation between Jesus and his mother is that no argument arises from their exchange. In calm, humble and deliberate assurance she speaks to the servants—they obviously knew her from previous visits to this home—and says: “Whatever He says to you, do it” (John 2:5).

The wedding must have been of observant Jews given the presence of six water pots of stone (20 to 30 gallons each) used for Jewish purification rites before and after each meal

(Matt. 15:1-2). Jesus directs the servants to fill the pots with water, and the servants obey, right up to the very brim. Jesus instructs them to dip out the water and take it to the master of the feast for his approval. The master of the feast is so engaged in the feasting he seems to have no clue they ran out of wine; he is ready, however, to taste the new batch of liquid being offered to the guests.

The master of the feast stops in his tracks no sooner the taste test is over to call the groom and declare the best wine, unlike the common custom, was left for the very last. (Walvoord, et al., 1983-c1985).

## **APPLICATION**

The question today, brothers and sisters, is what lesson do we find in this narrative to inform how we can each negotiate marriage or any other important relationship in a better way than we have in the past?

Do we get married or form other important relationships without counting the cost? Do we run out of the wine of patience, kindness, forgiveness and joy? Do we realize marriage and other relationships are not only to bring us comfort, companionship and joy but to give honor, praises and glory to God?

While it may have been a last minute plan, this couple invited Jesus to their wedding, and by definition into their lives. Have we intentionally invited Jesus into our homes and into our relationships to direct traffic and perform miracles?

The couple in Cana may not have known the significance of having Jesus at their marriage feast, but someone who knew and cared for them invited Jesus to be present in their midst.

Jesus used the water pots already in their home, a symbol of obedience to God. What do we already practice in our homes that Jesus can use to transform the reality of our marriage relationships and home?

There is nothing too hard for the Lord. He can make the impossible possible. He can change our emptiness to overflowing abundance. If we allow Jesus into our marriage and home, He can perform miracles that transform the embarrassment and pain of our lives.

So what are a few of the issues in marriage we don't know how to deal with and are causing us to run out of patience, kindness, forgiveness and joy?

On the issue of *kindness* the Bible states about the virtuous wife in Proverbs 31:26: “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of *kindness*.” Scripture also declares in 1 Corinthians 13:4: “Love suffers long and is *kind* . . .” And Ephesians 4:32 affirms: “And be *kind* to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”

About *patience* the Holy Book proclaims in James 1:4: “But let *patience* have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” The apostle Paul announces in 1 Timothy 6:11: “But you, O man (woman) of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, *patience*, gentleness.” And then in Romans 15:5: “Now may the God of *patience* and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus.”

On the subject of *forgiveness* Scripture announces in Matthew 6:14, 15: “For if you *forgive* men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also *forgive* you. But if you do not *forgive* men their trespasses, neither will your Father *forgive* your trespasses.” Then Psalm 86:5 proclaims: “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to *forgive*, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.” And the classic passage in 1 John 1:9 states: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to *forgive* us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Speaking about how we should behave with one another in marriage and in the home, Ellen White declares in *The Adventist Home*, p. 421: “Courtesy, even in little things, should be manifested by the parents toward each other. Universal kindness should be the law of the house. No rude language should be indulged; no bitter words should be spoken.”

## **The Emotional Bank Account**

We must recognize the need to employ the virtues in scripture in practical ways to negotiate marriage each day, in order to survive and thrive to be a blessing to our children, to our respective spouses, to our communities, our churches and our God.

A skill many are already aware of, but often forget to employ when we need a miracle from Jesus in our marriage or other relationships is called the Emotional Bank Account, employed by Dr. Stephen Covey, of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Your relationships with everyone and anyone are like regular bank accounts. Most of us, in real life, have bank accounts. To be sure, a number of us have much in our bank accounts, and a larger number of us have little in our bank accounts. In many cases, a

number of these accounts are overdrawn and we are paying penalty fees that we can ill afford.

During every interaction with every person we deal with every day of our lives we are either making deposits—that is, emotional deposits by what we say and how we say it, or what we do and how we do it, or we are making emotional withdrawals.

When we are kind to our spouse, children, boss, employee, church member or friend, we make emotional deposits. When we are difficult, rude, impatient, or unfaithful, we make emotional withdrawals.

Every relationship—certainly every marriage, and every other kind of relationship—experiences emotional deposits or withdrawals every day of our lives. So that, depending on how often we make deposits or withdrawals, the frequency will determine the viability or lack of sustainability of our relationships.

When we contribute equitably to the load of tasks in our homes, our husband or wife experiences an emotional deposit. When we behave in ways that do not affirm the relationship, the opposite takes place; and our spouse, children, boyfriend, girlfriend, boss, friend or employee experiences an emotional withdrawal. The more consistent we are in making emotional deposits in the emotional bank account of the people we are in relationship with, the stronger and healthier our relationship will be. If on the other hand almost everything we do in our relationships is an emotional withdrawal, very soon our emotional bank account will be overdrawn for lack of emotional deposits and we will experience bankruptcy in our respective marriages or relationships, because our behavior has simply consumed all the currency that was left.

## **CONCLUSION**

Every marriage has some good times, and every marriage has some bad times. This is also true of every relationship we will have in our lives. The hope is that you will have a great marriage with a few sad times; rather than an awful marriage with a few good times.

The truth is you can make the decision today, what kind of marriage (relationship) you will have, as far as it depends on you. A good place to begin is to choose to make daily deposits in your spouse's (friend's) emotional bank account.

In spite of our choices and good intentions, however, we will never reach our goal; we will never be successful, without the power and grace of Jesus. To have a marriage (relationship) filled with patience, kindness, forgiveness, and joy, we need the power and

grace of Jesus every day. The reality is, brothers and sisters, we need miracles in marriage to make it.

Jesus walks through our Cana of Galilee today. And when Jesus comes He brings peace. When Jesus comes, He brings joy. When Jesus comes, He brings healing. When Jesus comes, He brings forgiveness. When Jesus comes, He brings miracles to make up the deficits in each of our relationships today.

Let us decide today to walk like Jesus; talk like Jesus; love like Jesus; forgive like Jesus; be kind like Jesus; be patient like Jesus; to be like Jesus. Then the brokenness of our lives will be mended; the pain in our relationships will find healing; the anger in our relationships will find peace; the sadness in our relationships will find joy.

Let's invite Jesus into our hearts, our homes, and our lives, and we will experience miracles in marriages each day.

May God bless us to this end is our prayer.

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All Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

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## *Clasp My Hand, Lord*

By Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

### **[Opening Congregational Activity]**

Please raise one of your hands, as high as you can, and keep it there. . . until I tell you to put it down.

I'm always fascinating when I see how small children walk or stand, their small hand tucked inside the larger hand of their mom or dad, an older brother or sister, or some other adult. I don't know about you, but if I were to hold my arm up for a while, it would probably get very tired and go to sleep after just a couple of minutes. It would probably start to hurt, after a while, and little by little it would begin to sag. . . unless I use the other arm or something else to hold it up.

But children can walk or stand holding their parents' hand for a long time, and they don't seem to get tired of it. They hold on to these "giants" next to them and don't grow tired. Instead, holding their hand gives them a sense of security and closeness. A special bonding takes place each time the young child reaches up to grasp the hand of his or her parent. And the parent's heart flows down their arm to provide their child the warmth, the love, and the guidance they need.

When a child thrusts his or her small hand in yours, it may be smeared with ice cream or jelly, and there may be a wart under the right thumb, or a Band-Aid on a little finger. However, the most important thing about this little hand is that it is in yours at the moment, and you, as the parent, have the opportunity and privilege to be the primary disciple maker of your child.

I think it's the same way with God. No matter how grimy our grown-up hands are, the Father always loves to hold the hand of His child. As we reach up to Him He reaches down and holds our hands. We may not always feel it and that may be why so many times we grow tired of reaching up and give up. And that's when we need someone to come along and help us. Do you remember the story of the Israelites defending themselves from the Amalekites? (Exodus 17:8-13) Let's read it together:

Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Aaron and Hur came along and helped Moses when he grew tired of holding up his hands. Holding his hands up was not some magic trick he was doing to help Joshua. It was his connection with the Omnipotent. God wants us to know that with His help we can win our battles. But He also wants us to know we need to help each other, uphold one another, and encourage one another. We believe in God, but sometimes we also need someone with skin, someone like us, to help us get through the challenges of the day.

Parents have the opportunity to teach their children, through simple actions, that they too can reach up and clasp the hand of God. I'd like to mention just some this morning:

## **Prayer**

I'm sure we have heard or read these words from that beautiful little book *Steps to Christ*:

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. (White, 1982, p. 93)

As we pray with our children, we can model for them our conversation with God. The language we use, the respect we show, the simple language we use can speak volumes to them. Actually, I think sometimes children are so much better at praying than we are.

I recall reading the story of a pastor who had a little kitten stuck up in a tree, and the kitty would not come down. The tree was not sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and drove until the tree bent down, he could then reach up and get the kitten. As he moved just a little too far, the rope broke. The tree snapped upright and the kitten instantly sailed through the air and out of sight. He felt just terrible and walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they had seen a little kitten. Nobody had and finally he prayed, "Lord, I commit this kitten to Your keeping," and then went about his business.

A few days later, he was at the grocery store and met one of his church members. In her shopping cart he was amazed to see cat food. Now this woman was a cat hater and everyone knew it, so he asked her why she was buying cat food when she hated cats so much.

She replied, "You won't believe this, but I have been refusing to buy my little girl a cat even though she has been begging for one. Finally I told her that if God gives you a cat, I'll let you keep it. "I watched my child go out into the yard, get on her knees and ask God for a cat. Really, Pastor, you won't believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. A kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky with its paws spread out and landed right in front of her. Of course I had to let her keep the kitten because it came from God . . ." (Author unknown.)

We have the great opportunity to introduce our children to our Friend, Jesus. We have the privilege of being the ones who show them how to talk to God, Our Father, and to trust Him.

Parents, reach down and grasp the hand of your child and together reach up to Him in prayer!

## **Bible Study**

Professionals in the health sciences tell us that good, healthy communication has two ingredients: Speaking and listening. Actually, it is a little more than that. It is speaking assertively, that is, expressing clearly what one thinks, feels, and wants. But is also actively listening, that is, paying attention to what the other person tells us and reflecting back what we heard.

If good communication among humans has those two components, what about our communication with God? An "assertive" prayer is simply our way of talking to God about our thoughts and feelings, our wishes and wants, our pain and our joys.

The problem is that only a few people have actually been privileged to hear God's voice-Adam and Eve, Moses, Elijah, the disciples at the time of Jesus, Paul. So how can we have good communication with God? We can certainly talk to Him, but how does He talk to us? Again, Ellen White helps us with the answer: "Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us." (White, 1982, p. 93)

As we *reach Up* to God in prayer, He *reaches Down* to us through nature and through the Bible. No wonder the devil wants to distort the message that comes from these

two. He would rather we think of nature as if it were God (pantheism), or that God created the world and set it in motion (theism), or that He didn't create the world but that it happened by chance and evolved over time (evolution). In the same way the devil tries to distort God's message through His word by telling people that the Bible is not to be trusted, or that the Bible is full of myths and contradictions, or that no one can understand the messages contained in the Bible.

As parents we have the privilege of showing our children that God does communicate with us through the Bible, but we can't do that unless we read, hear, and do what it tells us (Revelation 1:3). Children are like little sponges. They absorb what we saturate them with.

Listen to the Bible story as told by a small child:

In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness, and some gas. God said, 'Give me a light!' and someone did. Then God made the world.

He split the Adam and made Eve. Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the Garden of Eden. I'm not sure what they were driven in though, because they didn't have cars.

Adam and Eve had a son, Cain, who hated his brother as long as he was Abel. Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be like a million or something.

One of the next important people is Noah, who was a good guy, but one of his kids was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on it. He asked some other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a rain check.

After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark in exchange for some pot roast.

Another important Bible guy is Moses, whose real name was Charlton Heston. Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh's people.

God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti. Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments. These include: don't lie, cheat, smoke, dance, or covet your neighbor's stuff.

Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more: Humor thy father and thy mother.

One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua who was the first Bible guy to use spies. Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell over on the town.

After Joshua came David. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot. He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My daddy says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me.

After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets. One of these was Jonah, who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed up on the shore. There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry about them.

After the Old Testament came the New Testament. Jesus is the star of The New. He was born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn too, because my mom is always saying to me, 'Close the door! Were you born in a barn?' It would be nice to say, 'As a matter of fact, I was.')

During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Democrats.

Jesus also had twelve opossums. The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him.

Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount. But the Democrats and all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead.

Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again. He went up to Heaven but will be back at the end of the Aluminum. His return is foretold in the book of Revolution.

That version makes us smile and I am sure that even the angels smile at the innocence and faith of little children. Parents, make sure that you firmly establish the family altar in your home. Have daily worship with your children. This will establish a pattern that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

Parents, reach down and grasp the hand of your child and together reach up to Him in Bible study.

### Talk and Walk the Faith

Research conducted by a major denomination (Freudenberg and Lawrence, 1998, p. 17) and confirmed by the Valuegenesis studies conducted among Adventist young people, 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 (Gillespie, V. B, Donahue, M. J., Boyatt, E., and Gane, B., 2004, p. 255-273)

The research is clear about those four activities, if we as parents are going to transmit our faith to our children. Commercials on television encourage parents to talk to their children about drugs and alcohol. Other commercials encourage parents and children to talk about serving in the military. Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about sex. So why not speak about the most important subject in their lives — their salvation?

That's what Moses referred to when he gave the instructions to the Israelites:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall *teach* them diligently to your children, and shall *talk* of them when you *sit in your house*, when you walk by the way, *when you lie down*, and *when you rise up*. (Deut. 6:6-7, emphasis supplied)

I believe hundreds of children are saying to-day, "Oh, that somebody would lead me to Christ!" A pastor was talking to parents about the importance of taking their children by the hand and leading them to Christ. As he was speaking, a little girl, only about three or four years old, jumped out of her mother's lap, and reaching up her little hand, said, "Will you please lead me to Jesus, mommy?" This little girl wanted her mommy to take her at once.

I believe many children would utter the same words, "Will you please lead me to Jesus?" Dear parents, **Reach Down** and take the hand of your child and then **Reach Up** to Him as you talk about and live your faith! Walk hand in hand towards Jesus!

## **Additional /Optional Materials That May be Incorporated:**

### **Scripture**

Genesis 14:22 — Abraham

Psalms 16:8, 11 — The gift of courage

Psalms 18:11 — The gift of pleasure

Psalms 18:35 — The gift of salvation “has held me up”

Psalms 31:5 — The gift of redemption “in your hands I commit my spirit” (Ps 44:2, 3)

Psalms 32:4 — The gift of repentance (Ps 38:2)

Psalms 37:24 — Lifts us up – song: He raised me up

Matthew 14:30, 31 — Peter (sinking) — help when in trouble

### **Spirit of Prophecy**

In your business, in companionship for leisure hours, and in alliance for life, let all the associations you form be entered upon with earnest, humble prayer. You will thus show that you honor God, and God will honor you. Pray when you are fainthearted. When you are desponding, close the lips firmly to men; do not shadow the path of others; but tell everything to Jesus. Reach up your hands for help. In your weakness lay hold of infinite strength. Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith, that you may see light in God's light and rejoice in His love. (White, 1964a, p. 48)

The cross speaks life, and not death, to the soul that believes in Jesus. Welcome the precious life-giving rays that shine from the cross of Calvary. Reach up for the blessing, believe for the blessing . . . (White, 1967, p. 52)

If you will take hold of the work earnestly and, without making any apology for sin, will condemn sin in the flesh and reach up in faith and hope for divine grace and right judgment, you may overcome those deficiencies in your character which disqualify you for laboring in the cause of God. You have not advanced or improved for many years. You are further today from the standard of Christian perfection, from possessing the qualifications which should be found in the minister of the gospel, than you were a few months after you had received the truth. (White, 1948a, p. 465)

Reach up and grasp His hand, that the touch may electrify you and charge you with the sweet properties of His own matchless character. You may open your hearts to

His love, and let His power transform you and His grace be your strength. Then will you have a powerful influence for good. Your moral strength will be equal to the closest test of character. Your integrity will be pure and sanctified. Then will your light break forth as the morning. (White, 1948b, p. 63)

Reach up, higher and still higher, taking hold of one line of faith after another. Walk and work in love to God and the poor oppressed ones, and the Lord will be your helper. (White, 1964b, p. 328)

We may reach up to Jesus Christ who is our Advocate in the heavenly courts. We need a friend at court. We have been sinning, been disobedient, been transgressors, and it is of the highest consequence to us that we have a Friend at court to plead our cases to the Father. He says, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me." Well, will all be drawn? Christ draws but will they respond to the drawing? Will they come? The invitation here in Revelation is this: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" Revelation 22:17. (White, 1979, p. 223)

We do not ask for enough of the good things God has promised. If we would reach up higher and expect more, our petitions would reveal the quickening influence that comes to every soul who asks with the full expectation of being heard and answered. The Lord is not glorified by the tame supplications which show that nothing is expected. He desires everyone who believes to approach the throne of grace with earnestness and assurance. (White, 1901, p.2 (488); 1995, p. 284)

### **Children's Story: "Reaching the Gift"**

Use the children's story, "Reaching the Gift" in this planbook.

### **Songs for Family Worship**

There are many wonderful songs that can be used for family worship.

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## *Grace in the Garden*

By John S. Nixon

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7).

It is the sixth day of the world’s first week, and God is nearly finished with His work. He has one or two things more to do, and He has saved the best for last. The stage is now set for Creation’s crowning act. Holy angels have watched with wonder from the very first day when the great God of heaven stepped out into the middle of nothing and said to nothing, “‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). The psalmist says: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” “For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:6, 9).

But now the Creator employs a different method. God does not speak this time. Instead, God bends down and scoops a handful of earth and with it begins to fashion the man. He sculpts and outlines; He shapes and molds; He patterns and casts. His arms hug a huge torso. His fingertips tend a tiny capillary. And creative genius forms a glorious organism with interlocking systems--endocrine, muscular, skeletal, neurological, pulmonary, lymphatic, cardio-vascular. “Fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14)!

At the crown of it all, God creates an organ of reason, covered with a convoluted layer of gray matter. Here will reside the seat of intelligence, the center of the powers of reason and understanding, of creativity and language. Then with the construction completed and everything in its place, the Great Creator, Himself uncreated, pauses and inhales deeply. He bends even lower now, His own face to the ground, and breathes into the nostrils of the earthy shell. And the chest expands as the lungs inflate, the nerves generate, the heart palpitates, the blood circulates, the cells activate, the dust becomes flesh, the brain becomes a mind, and the man becomes a living soul.

And the cosmological question is answered even before we begin our own investigation. It is not by rationality that the truth of creation is known. It is not a scientific conclusion. Science cannot replace God, since science did not create itself. It is a falsehood and a confusion of order to make the derivative original and the Original derivative (Malik, 1982, p. 34). Science is our guide among things as they are, but it cannot account for things being as they are. No one has the right to be dogmatic about things that cannot be known except by divine revelation (Chambers, 2000, p. 80).

And it is by revelation, not reason, that we come to know what the Bible never attempts to prove: that the world was created in six literal days of evenings and mornings, in which God was not dependent on preexisting matter. It is a truth incompatible with the scientific method. It is not a theory; it is a belief, it is a confession. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Heb. 11:3). “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows **His** handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

This is our Father’s world and in Creation as in redemption it is His finished work. God no more left Creation to be completed by natural processes than He left redemption to be completed by religious ones. When the atonement was completed at the cross, Jesus cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). And when Creation was concluded on the sixth day, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). From earth to sky, from animals to humans, from sea to shining sea, God made them all. This is our Father’s world!

This, then, is the glorious beginning of the human family from the hand of God—full of promise and full of potential. Saving grace is in reserve, not yet needed. Forgiveness has not yet appeared, for there is nothing to forgive. But faith must be tested.

## **Fatal Curiosity**

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (Gen. 3:6).

The downfall of Eve began when she decided to conduct her own investigation. This was the first departure from complete trust in God’s word. God never said that the fruit of the tree was not good for food. He only said they were not to eat of it. He even said it with a warning of consequences: “In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). But what God left unsaid was the reason for His command. He gave a “what,” but He did not give a “why”, it was a test of faith.

The omitted information becomes the seed of the temptation the serpent crafts to appeal to human vanity. Eve must decide, in the face of the serpent’s challenge and the unexplained command of God, whom she believes. She can take God at His word and obey, or she can doubt the divine veracity and disobey. But she must do one or the other.

The nature of sin runs deeper than we first think. It does not begin with the deed; it begins with the thought. Sin first appears at the subconscious level where we make decisions, even before we act. The moment we determine to take matters into our own hands, to employ our will at our own discretion—in that hidden moment we depart from faith in God. Choice is the human sovereignty God will never take away, but there are two ways in which we may use it—to honor God or ourselves; to obey His loving commands or to follow our own discretion. In other words, by the grace of God we have the freedom to give up our freedom for the sake of God’s love. And through this surrender a new freedom is found, freedom to do the will of God in every situation.

### **Appearance of the Supernatural**

Jesus Christ is the only way out of the deathtrap of sin; and He, too, makes His appearance in the beginning. Before the angel drives them away from the tree of life, Adam and Eve receive a promise that catches Satan off guard. Turning to the serpent, the Lord God says: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Satan does not completely understand, but he knows it is a threat to his kingdom. To bruise a serpent’s head is to kill it. God is prophesying the end of Satan’s reign, and the Agent of his demise will be the Seed of the woman. Here is the strategy Satan never dreamed of; God was prepared to go further than it was possible for the enemy to conceive. At the very place where humans were at their worst, God was at His best, revealing the depth of a love that is beyond comprehension.

Genesis 3 closes with a ceremony of eternal significance in which God provides a covering for the man and woman. “The Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). Note: garments of skin, not garments of wool. This was no shearing of a live animal; for this to happen a creature had to die. And it is significant that the act of redemption takes place before the man and woman are barred from Eden, so they will know that exclusion from the garden does not mean the absence of God (Tonstad, 2009, p. 58). It is from the tree they are cut off, not from the Creator.

And then it appears. Seemingly from nowhere. Something for which human vocabulary must create a new word. It operates on different laws than the laws of nature. Everything else in the created order runs on the laws of cause and effect—the sun makes you hot; water makes you wet; the wind blows and trees bend; trees rise up and shadows are cast—everything fixed, everything predictable.

But suddenly comes a new life principle. Above the laws of natural existence, something supernatural comes into view.

This is not kindness--God's kindness appears throughout the universe. This is not goodness--God's goodness and favor are in every solar system. This is something else. This is kindness that is underserved; this is favor that is unwarranted; blessing where condemnation would belong; forgiveness where judgment should be. As the man and woman turn their backs on the tree of life, never to taste of its fruit again, they are wearing the clothing God provided for them with blood, as a pledge that they will eat from the tree again someday.

When they came before God after sin, the man and the woman were already clothed in garments they had made, but this would not do.

We cannot save ourselves or make any contribution to our own justification. So God makes new garments of His own choosing, and He does so by the shedding of blood. For "without shedding of blood there is no remission." of sin (Heb. 9:22, NIV).

Because of divine intervention the effect of sin is no longer death to the sinner. Instead, through the operation of this new thing which requires a new word, the sinner escapes the effect that should naturally follow cause, and inherits a new result.

This thing is called grace. It was not an afterthought, it was already in reserve. As soon as there was sin, there was a Savior.

This time, however, the Lord God does not speak. Instead, He bends down, scoops a handful of earth and prepares a body through which to enter humanity by the miracle of Incarnation (Heb. 10:5). It is a divine act of infinite condescension born of enduring love. What would we do without God's grace?

There were two trees planted in the middle of the Garden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But at the moment of humanity's fall, God planted a third tree. This is the tree that rescues from eternal destruction all who believe. Jesus died on that third tree, and the victory He won becomes our own. Through His sacrifice we escape the condemnation of sin.

The goal of redemption has always been that we might inherit a death-free incorruptibility, but not as our own achievement. Redemption comes only as the free gift of grace by which the righteousness of Christ is bestowed on us. Jesus Himself is with us by His Spirit and we become more than conquerors through Him; "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

May we reach up to God for power and grace each day; and by so doing experience new hope as we embrace God's gift of salvation.

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This sermon was first preached as a devotional, Thursday, June 24, 2010 at the 59<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia and first published June 25, 2010 in the *Adventist Review*. Used by permission.

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## *Responsive Reading: Reaching Up as a Church Family*

By Kathleen Sowards

*Reader:* “And Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’”  
*Matthew 18:2, 3*

**Congregation:** “. . . One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”  
**Philippians 3:13, 14**

*Reader:* “Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.” *Isaiah 40:26*

**Congregation:** “Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on Him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon” **Is. 55:6, 7**

*Reader:* “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” *1 John 2:1*

**Congregation:** “Hear the voice of my supplications When I cry to You, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.” **Psalm 28:2**

*Reader:* “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”  
*Philippians 4:8*

**Congregation:**        **“. . . and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7**

*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, for love will cover a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” 1 Peter 4:7-9*

**Congregation:**        **“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” 1 John 3:17-18**

*Reader:*                *“And now, **little children**, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” 1 John 2:28*

**Congregation:**        **“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” Luke 21:27, 28**

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# *Revival and Reformation in Marriage*

By Pedro Iglesias



Slide 1



## Revival and Reformation in Marriage

Slide 2



## Introduction:

When I was a little boy, I use to go out with my neighborhood friends to the field to hunt birds. When we went out armed with slings, the little birds were in danger. We use to do it for business and for pleasure. When it was for business, we tried not to hurt the birds too much. It was important for the birds to fall to the ground alive. It was difficult to estimate the force so as not to kill the bird. When we found the bird almost dead, we would run and pick it up and use a very popular method to revive the bird. The bird would be placed under a bucket, then we tapped on it to produce noise. After this we would look under the bucket to see how our "patient" was doing. If the bird did not react, we repeated the same process until it worked. This process was successful most of the time. There was no scientific explanation for this. However, it was a great way to raise the "dead". To be sure the birds from those

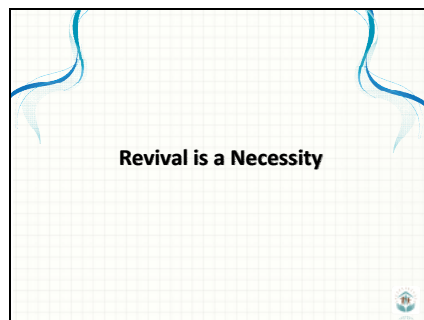
days had good luck with me, because I didn't have good aim.

Not only birds need to be revived when they are dying. As Christians we talk about the necessity of spiritual revival. Birds, Christians, and marriages need revival.

The Adventist church has started a new program; the revival and reformation of each church member. The invitation to revival affects the integrity of human life. Married life does not escape this reality.

The goal of this seminar is to invite participants to join the church's revival program and extend the benefits to their respective marriages.

Slide 3



### **Revival is a necessity.**

During the apostasy of the kingdom of Judah, the Prophet Habakkuk prophesied. In the years 612 to 586 BC, the last four kings of Judah had been evil. Their reigns were characterized by forgetfulness and the rejection of God. The times were full of anarchy, immorality, persecution and violence. Babylon was becoming a menacing power and Judah would soon fall under its oppressive yoke. The prophet did not understand why God didn't intervene. He soon realized it was better to always depend on God, who is at the helm, and drives the destiny of His people.

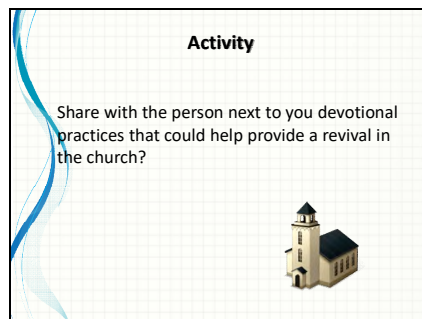
In the middle of this state of affairs Habakkuk prayed to God: *“O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.”* (Habakkuk 3:2). We must ask God to do the work needed to save His people. The word revive, suggests to live again, to resuscitate, to recuperate, to come around, or to wake up.

Today, as members of Christ’s body we have to ask God to revive us to do the work He has entrusted to us. These times demand it. Ellen White wrote:

*“Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith and piety, there are true followers of Christ in these churches. Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times.”* (1888, p. 464)

It is an encouraging promise that confirms God’s intention to provide such a revival leading to the preparation of the final harvest. The concept of revival must be clear. A good explanation is: *“Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death”.* (White, 1986, p. 128)

Slide 4



### Activity with Church in General

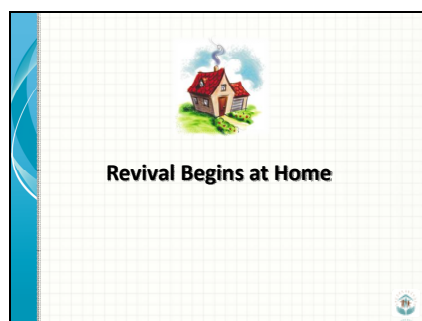
Ask the people present to share with the person next to them devotional practices that could help provide a revival in the church?

Share the answers with everyone.

Write a list of the answers the groups come up with.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Slide 5



### Revival must start at home.

Looking for spiritual revival among church members does not have to be an individual matter. The family, an important part of the church, has to be taken into account. The message of the prophet Malachi promises a reform in family relationships before Christ returns:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:5, 6,)

Ellen White offered: “The great reformatory movement must begin in the home”. (1954, p. 489)

For this reform to happen, it is obvious we will need a revival.

Slide 6

**Family Activity**

Work together on the following activities:

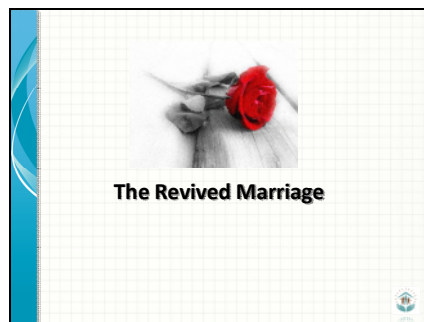
- Write a list of spiritual activities you no longer practice.
- Chose an abandoned activity and make the decision to revive it.
- Share your ideas with others.

### Activities for Families

- In the beginning of the century Ellen White urges the church to go house to house, pray, and give Bible studies. The invitation to accept the message should be given to each family. Read the following comment: “Many individuals might be laboring in towns and cities, visiting from house to house, becoming acquainted with families, entering into their social life, dining at their tables, entering into conversation by their firesides, dropping the precious seed of truth all along the line.” (White, 1897, p. 274.
- Ask each family to work together on the following activities:
  - Write a list of spiritual activities you no longer practice. Like family worship.
  - Chose an abandoned activity and make the decision to revive it.

- Share your ideas with others.

Slide 7



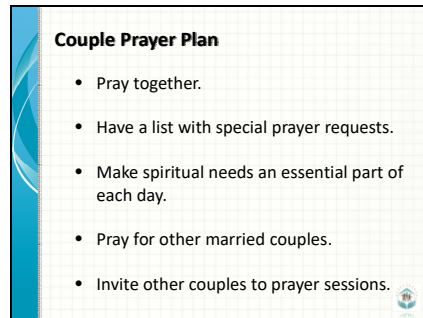
### **The Revived Marriage**

Revival is a personal matter.

Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come. There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. (White, 1986, p. 122)

Even though revival is personal, married couples must unite in search of such an experience. Spouses need to make this idea a priority as a couple.

Slide 8



**Couple Prayer Plan**

- Pray together.
- Have a list with special prayer requests.
- Make spiritual needs an essential part of each day.
- Pray for other married couples.
- Invite other couples to prayer sessions.

## **Ideas to have a marriage that is connected to heaven**

### **Prayer**

Ellen White states:

Affection cannot be lasting, even in the home circle, unless there is a conformity of the will and disposition to the will of God. All the faculties and passions are to be brought into harmony with the attributes of Jesus Christ. If the father and mother in the love and fear of God unite their interests to have authority in the home, they will see the necessity of much prayer, much sober reflection. And as they seek God, their eyes will be opened to see heavenly messengers present to protect them in answer to the prayer of faith. They will overcome the weaknesses of their character and go on unto perfection. (1956, p. 316)

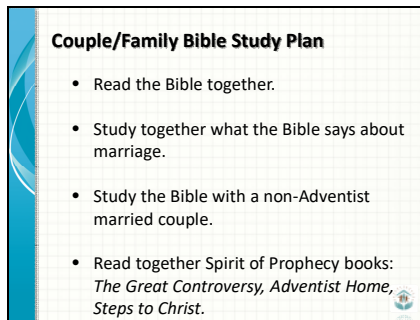
Blessings have been promised to husbands and wives looking for inspiration in Christ, and use prayer as a tool.

Develop a prayer plan together as a couple. For example:

- Pray together.
- Have a list with special prayer requests.
- Make spiritual needs an essential part of each day.

- Pray for other married couples.
- Invite other couples to prayer sessions.

Slide 9



**Couple/Family Bible Study Plan**

- Read the Bible together.
- Study together what the Bible says about marriage.
- Study the Bible with a non-Adventist married couple.
- Read together Spirit of Prophecy books: *The Great Controversy, Adventist Home, Steps to Christ.*

### **Studying the Bible.**

#### **Activity with Church Family**

Ask: Why does the study of God's word contribute to revival?

Couples should develop a Bible study plan together.

- Read the Bible through together in one year.
- Study together what the Bible has to say about marriage.
- Study the Bible with a non-member married couple.
- Read together any Spirit of Prophecy book, like: *The Adventist Home, Child Guidance, or Steps to Christ.*
- Buy a Spirit of Prophecy book and give it as a present to a married couple.

**Ask the Holy Spirit for help.**

To obtain revival we need a lot of power. A revival of the Holy Spirit cannot be realized by only exercising the human will. Revival requires a power superior to ours. We must understand this power is at our disposal if we ask for it.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now. Seek for it, pray for it, believe for it. We must have it, and Heaven is waiting to bestow it. (White, 1895, p. 2; 1946, p. 701)

**Meditate on the life of Christ.**

A well-known quote inspired by God invites us to reflect on Jesus, His life and work while He was on earth.

“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at least, we must learn the lessons of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.” (White, 1940, p. 80)

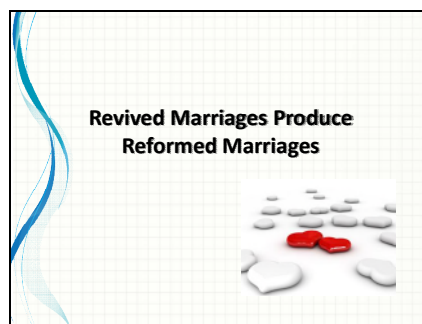
Meditating on the life of Jesus will

connect us with heaven and will revive our love towards God. Spouses should come together and work on a plan to meditate on the life of Christ.

- Each day read one or two chapters of the Gospels.
- Read together *The Desire of Ages* or *Christ's Object Lessons*.
- Talk about the blessings you have received through your experience with Jesus Christ.

If both wife and husband will unite with humility and determination to connect with God; if they pray constantly; if they study God's words methodically; if they ask for daily anointing of the Holy Spirit; and if they meditate on Jesus' life and make it a habit; the promise of revival will be fulfilled in their lives.

Slide 10



### **Revived marriages produce reformed marriages**

Revived marriages experience change that is enriching to marriage. Of course, each spouse will need to put his or her will in God's hands, and obey God's commandments.

At this point it is a good idea to re-read the definition for revival: "Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. (White, 1986, p. 128)

Experiencing revival will produce reform in the individual, and in their marriage. Both are strongly combined. Ellen White declares: “Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend. (White, 1902, p. 1; 1986, p. 128)

But, what does the word *reformation* mean? Reformation means reorganization; a change in ideas, theories, habits, and practices. Reformation will not produce good fruit unless it is related to being revived by the Spirit.

At various times during marriage, life will get disorganized. Change in the stages of married life makes it necessary to constantly be reorganizing.

### **Activity with Everyone**

Distribute paper to everyone present and ask them to write changes that must take place in their lives as a result of revival.

You should have all the Spirit of Prophecy quotations above printed and ready to hand out.

Change of ideas

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Change of theories

---

Change of habits

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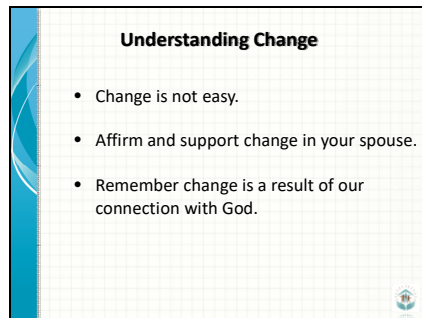
Change in practices

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### **Couple Activity/Activity with Couples**

- Ask married couples to work with their respective spouses and discuss what changes need to take place in their respective marriages
- When finished, ask each married couple, and each individual present to pray and ask God to help them with whatever change needs to take place in their lives.

Slide 11



### **Change is not easy.**

Change is not easy. Many of the changes discussed and written above have to do with habits and practices that help form good characters.

Thinking about the need to change may discourage many. However, Ellen White reminds us: “Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easier matter . . . A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ.” (White, 1941, p. 331)

It is good to emphasize that to experience change, we need to have

individual effort, as well as the enabling grace of Christ.

**Affirm and support change in your spouse.**

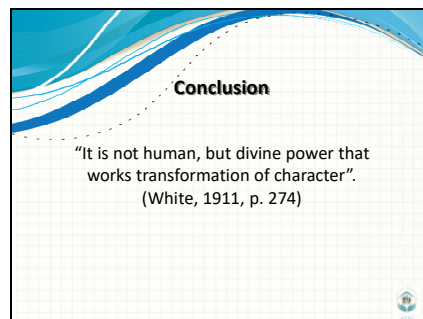
Spouses need to support each other in their efforts to change. It feels good to have the support of the person we love. Often this does not happen. One spouse may decide to change a habit and the other spouse will either sabotage the initiative or wait until there is a relapse; then make statements like: “I knew you wouldn’t be able to do it”.

We invite you to support each other in your efforts to grow and reform. The wise man Solomon states: “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

**Remember change is a result of our connection with God.**

Ellen White states: “It is not human, but divine power that works transformation of character”. (White, 1911, p. 274)

Slide 12



## CONCLUSION

When the church urges revival for each member, spouses need to support each other so that no member or couple will miss out on the blessings.

When that happens, not only will the church be reformed; but marriages in the church will also be the recipient of reformation.

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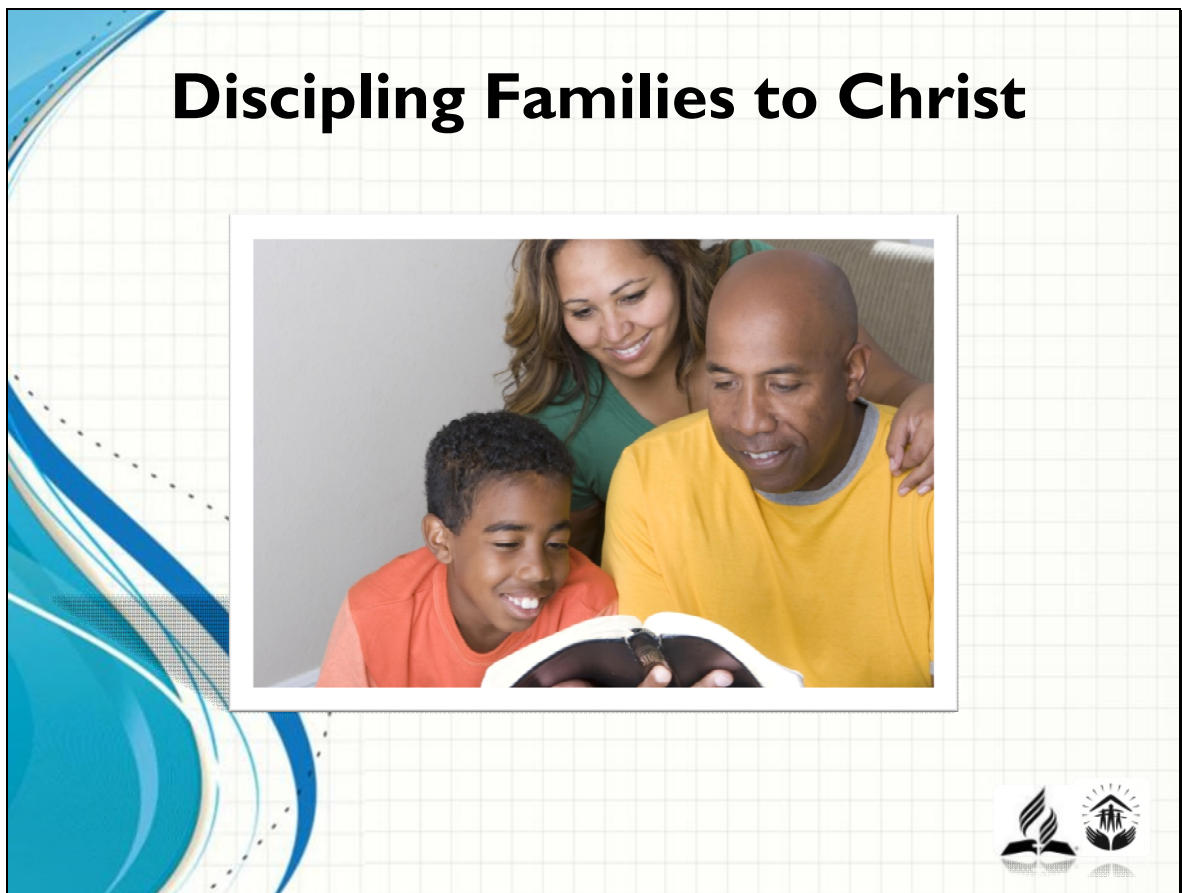
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Pedro Iglesias, MA, is the Director of Family Ministries for the Inter-American Division.

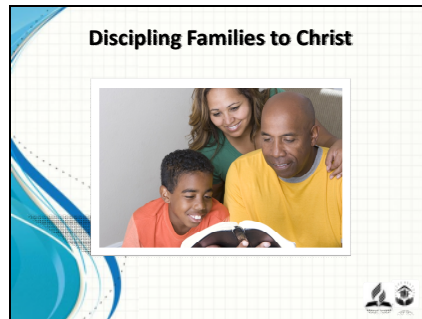


# *Discipling Families to Christ: Kids in Discipleship*

By Don MacLafferty



Slide 1



**Discipling Families to Christ - 50 Minutes**

**YOU NEED:**

A Power Point slide with a personal photo

Slide 2



**WHY – 5 minutes**

Activity: Each person draws the outline of his foot on a piece of paper. Label the foot outline with the name of a favorite place you have taken a family member.

Everyone divides into pairs for 2 minutes and shares why their favourite place was special.

- Say: **“Just as each of us has special places where our feet have taken us, Jesus has a special place He wants to take us – Heaven. Our journey along the way is our personal adventure of discipleship.”**

Slide 3

Why do we need to make the discipleship of our children a high priority NOW?



**51% +**

**WHAT & HOW – 35 minutes**

Ask the participants if they can guess what the number represents. Current research from Value Genesis and Dr. Roger Dudley (*Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church*) reveals that the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America is losing more than 50% of our Adventist young people by the time they reach their 20's. (Give statistics for your own country/world area if you have them).

Slide 4

Why do we need to make the discipleship of our children a high priority NOW?



**36 / 52**



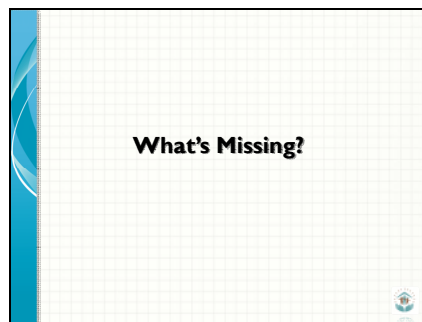
36 is the median age of the population of the United States 52 is the median age of the population of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (Innovation, 2006).

Slide 5



According to research by George Barna, the “magic” window to secure decisions for Jesus Christ is from birth – 13. Considering the entire range of a person’s life, he/she is most open to accepting Jesus during this narrow age range. (Barna, 2003, pps. 18, 24, 47).

Slide 6



Our children are often missing:

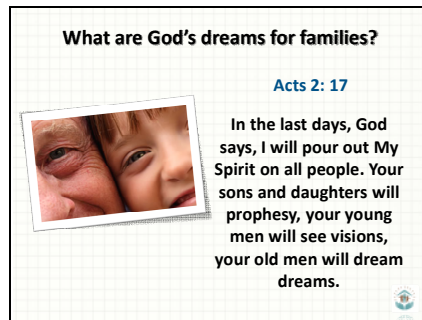
- a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- the assurance of salvation
- daily time alone with God
- a Biblical foundation for their faith
- the joy of using their gifts in worship, ministry, and mission
- the joy of discipling their friends to Jesus

Slide 7



God has revealed His dreams for our families in His Word.

Slide 8




Invite participants to read Acts 2:17 in unison. Point out that Peter is quoting Joel 2.

Ask: "What is God's dream for families?"

- Filled with the Holy Spirit
- Prophesying
- Young to have visions and the old to dream dreams
- It is time for us to experience these things together


## Slide 9

**What are God's dreams for families?**



**Malachi 4:5,6**

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah... He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers . . .





Invite participants to read Malachi 4:5, 6 in unison.

Ask: "What is God's dream for families?"

- fathers and mothers whose hearts are drawn to their children
- children's hearts are drawn to their parents

## Slide 10

**The MacLafferty Family**



Briefly tell Pastor Don MacLafferty's story: In 1999, Don was not investing one-on-one time with his children. His life was focused on what God was doing in the church rather than what God was yearning to do in his home.

- young pastor in church building project
- wintry night – came home for supper then off to building committee meeting
- said "Bye!" – Julie and Jason (ages 3 and 7) cried, "Daddy, stay home with us."
- "Can't stay. Made a promise. Have to go."
- They clung to Don's neck, crying, "Daddy, you never play with us."
- Don pried their little fingers from his neck, said goodbye and left.
- Walking across the road to the church, God got through to him.
- Stood in the middle of the street, looking back and forth from the lighted church to his home.
- God said, "When I come, I won't ask

you about the new church you built. I won't ask you how many members joined your church. I will ask you "Where are Julie and Jason?"

- God called this Daddy's heart back to his children.
- This experience sent Don on a journey to seek God's will.
- Don discovered God's dreams for his own children and family.
- The vision for Kids in Discipleship was clear to him --Need to call the hearts of parents back to their children --Need to equip parents to be the primary spiritual mentor of their own children to fulfill God's dreams for them. In 2002, God moved Pastor Don's heart to launch Kids In Discipleship ministry.

Consider putting in a picture of your own and personalizing the K.I.D. Vision as it relates to your and your children.

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

Ask: "What is God's dream for families?"

- Parents to love the Lord with all their hearts
- Children to be mentored by their parents to love the Lord with all their hearts and to obey God's commandments

Slide 11


**What are God's dreams for families?**  
Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one.

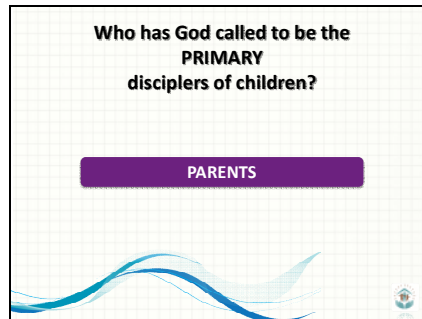
Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.



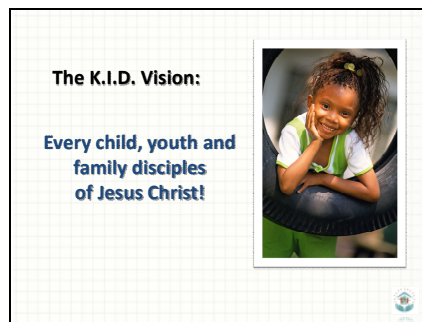
Slide 12



How do we know that God's plan is for parents to mentor their children?

- The Deuteronomy Model says, "when you sit at home, when you walk along the way, when you lie down, when you get up."

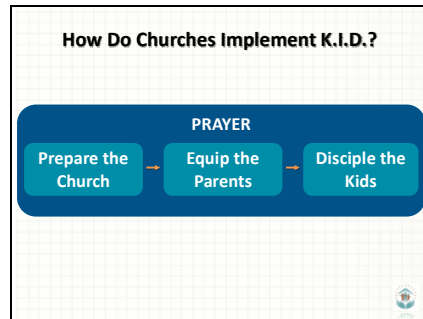
Slide 13



God's dream is that our children, youth and families be empowered disciples of His **now**, not at some future time. Kids in Discipleship is a ministry offered in local churches specially designed for families and focused on children.

A local K.I.D. Ministry is a tool for churches to use to be intentional about discipleship. This ministry in a local church will equip parents to first grow as disciples themselves and then to disciple their own children. Families will grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, their biblical foundation in the Seventh-day Adventist movement, and will be empowered to participate in their local church in worship, in ministry to other believers, and in mission to others outside our faith.

Slide 14



How do churches start a K.I.D. ministry for the families and children of their congregation?


- Churches begin by establishing a prayer ministry with a prayer coordinator who recruits other prayer partners to seek God's will for the families and children of their local congregation. We can't overestimate the value of prayer. The Holy Spirit is eager to turn the hearts of parents to their children and children to their parents.
- Second, church teams attend a K.I.D. University. They return home to prepare their church to receive and support this discipleship ministry.
- The next step is to equip the parents to be disciple makers. Parents and other mentors learn to go deeper in their relationship with Jesus in their own discipleship experience. Then they learn how to be intentional in mentoring their children.
- Lastly the children (together with their parents/mentors) are disciplined to Jesus. They grow into a deeper relationship with Jesus. They learn how to have their own time alone with God. They learn the truths of Jesus as found in His Word. They learn how to share Jesus with others.

Slide 15

PRAYER

Prepare the Church

1. Share the Biblical Vision.
2. Preach a sermon series.



Small circular logo in the bottom right corner.

Share the Biblical vision for discipling children, youth and families – during a Sabbath sermon. (Feel free to use this power point.)

Slide 16

PRAYER

Equip the Parents

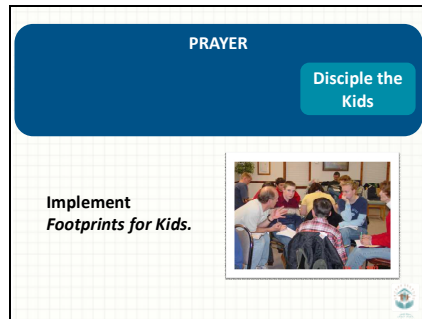


Implement *Footprints for Parents & Mentors*.

Small circular logo in the bottom right corner.

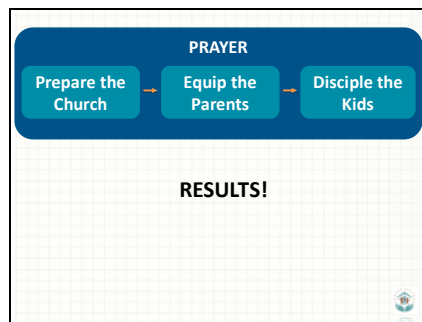
*Footprints for Parents & Mentors* is a small group curriculum designed for 12 weeks.

Slide 17



*Footprints for Kids* is a family-friendly discipleship journey of 24 weeks using a small group curriculum.

Slide 18



**What are the results for parents & mentors?**

- They rediscover Jesus call to discipleship.
- They intentionally mentor their own children.
- They don't need to depend upon anyone else to connect their children to Jesus. *(Tell a story here)*

**What are the results for families?**

- Family relationships are strengthened.
- Spiritual communication is increased and "natural."
- They experience together a deeper involvement in the life of the church in worship and ministry and mission. *(Tell a story here)*

**What are the results for children?**

- Children establish a personal connection to Jesus in daily time alone

with Him.

- Children understand the Biblical foundation for their Christian beliefs.
- Children experience the joy of bringing their friends to Jesus. *(Tell a story here)*

Slide 19



**IF – 10 minutes**

**Discussion Time:** Teams discuss the following:

- If a family in your church went through a life-transforming discipleship journey with Jesus how would it affect their home?
- How might K.I.D. ministry affect your church?
- How might it affect the spiritual lives of the church members?

Invite 1 – 2 comments. Give the participants time to pair/share their answer to this questions.

- Invite comments and questions.

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Don MacLafferty, MDiv, is a Pastor in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference and Founded Kids In Discipleship in 2002. For more information on *Kids In Discipleship* log into [dmac@kidsindiscipleship.org](mailto:dmac@kidsindiscipleship.org).



# *Family Worship: Families Reaching Up*

By Willie and Elaine Oliver



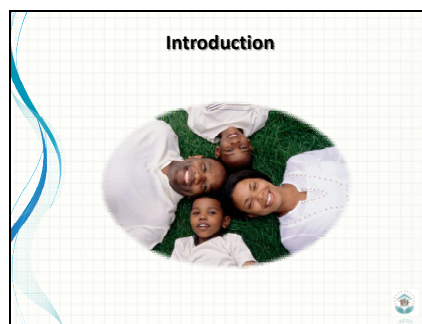
Slide 1



### **Introduction**

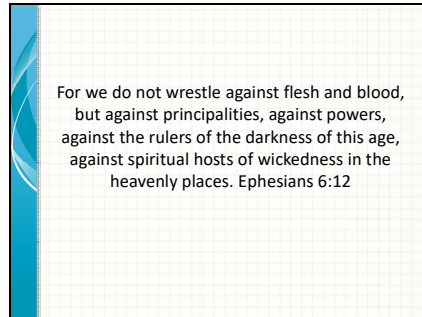
Family worship has been a well-established spiritual ritual or discipline in Christian homes for generations. More than a ritual, however, family worship can provide a solid foundation for connecting families to God, creating lasting family bonding, and leaving a spiritual legacy.

Slide 2



Our lives today are challenged by many forces which are pulling on our families – these forces are as strong as the winds of a tornado leaving many families destroyed or their lives filled with debris. These forces do not come to us unexplained or even as a surprise. From the beginning of earth's history, Satan has launched an attack on God's primary institutions — family and the Sabbath.

Slide 3



Read Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

Slide 4

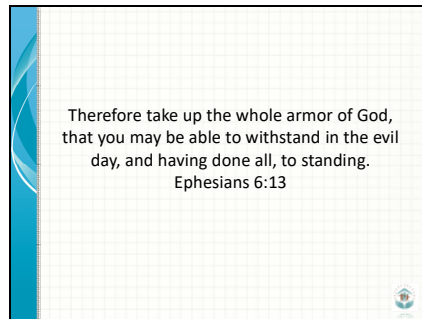


Ask: What are some of the attacks on God's family today?

Possible answers from the audience:

- Drugs and alcohol
- Questionable television and internet programming
- Extramarital affairs
- Premarital sex
- Divorce
- Busyness
- Overeating
- Etc.

## Slide 5

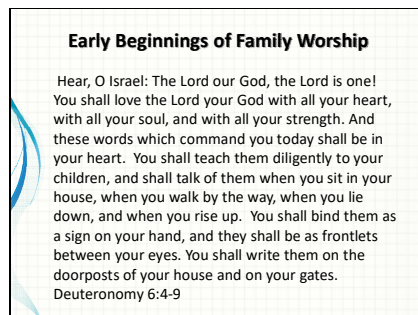


Read Ephesians 6:13.

As people of God, we must decide either to be swept away by these winds or build a protective shelter for our families and steer our families in the right direction toward the shelter. Family worship serves as a powerful shelter, armor, and protection for our families.

Prayer and reading the bible are included in the armor: communicating with God, talking and listening to Him through prayer and studying the bible. Family worship provides a structured way for families to study God's word, pray or communicate with God, and have fellowship together. Every Christian family has this armor available to them.

## Slide 6



### Early Beginnings of Family Worship

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy

6:4-9

This passage of scripture is called the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). It is included in Moses' farewell address to the Jewish people. It is the first prayer that a Jewish child is taught. Many Jews still recite the Shema at least twice daily; once in the morning and once in the evening. It is the last words a Jew says prior to death. Special emphasis is given to the words "The Lord our God, the Lord is One!" Jewish scholars suggest that the Shema is a testimony of the sovereignty of God. It is a pledge of allegiance to the only one God and a declaration of faith. (Parsons, 2010, Hebrews for Christians)

Slide 7

**The purpose of the *Shema* is to:**

- Teach our children about God.
- Bond our family together.
- Ask for protection for our families and our children.
- Leave a spiritual legacy.

The slide features a light green grid background with a blue decorative border on the left. A small image of a scroll with Hebrew text is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide content area.

The purpose of the *Shema* is to:

- Teach our children about God
- Bond our family together
- Ask for protection for our families and our children
- Leave a spiritual legacy


The *Shema* provides a wonderful framework for family worship. Having family worship is like putting the blood of Christ on the doorpost signaling that your family belongs to Christ.

Slide 8

**Why Have Family Worship?**

*“Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around the family altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations.”*

*Ministry of Healing, p. 393*



### Why Have Family Worship?



Ellen White strongly encouraged family worship.

“Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around the family altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations.” Ministry of Healing, p. 393

Slide 9

**Family Worship Bible Times**

- Abraham built an altar wherever he pitched his tent
- Families offered animal sacrifices on an altar



### Family Worship Bible Times



- Abraham built an altar wherever he pitched his tent
- Families offered animal sacrifices on an altar

In Bible times, the altar was made of twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel. A lamb was placed on the altar and slain, representing the Lamb of God (Jesus) who would die for mankind. This was a place of worship. It was a place where forgiveness of sins was possible through the substitution of one life for the penitent. Altars were also established as memorials as an act of celebration. They were temporary and were constantly being rebuilt.

## Slide 10

**Family Worship Today**

- Dedicate our families morning and evening in worship
- Family time

**Family Worship Today**

- Dedicate our families morning and evening in worship
- Family time

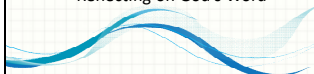
The term family altar today is used to refer to the act of gathering family members together to worship. As in bible times, the time should be used to give praises to the Creator and remind our families of God's unconditional love and the great sacrifice He made and "gave His only begotten Son. . ." (John 3:16), so that we could have eternal life.

Today's family worship serves as a time of fellowship and bonding between family members. It should be creative, and should give all members an opportunity to participate in this spiritual activity. We will discuss this in more detail later.

## Slide 11

**What is Worship?**

- Adoration
- Acknowledging God as Lord and Savior
- Obedience to God
- Sacrifice of one's self and time
- Honoring and exalting God with praise, thanksgiving, and humility
- Singing, praying, reading God's Word
- Reflecting on God's Word

**What is Worship?**

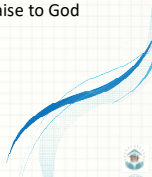
- Adoration
- Acknowledging God as Lord and Savior
- Obedience to God
- Sacrifice of one's self and time
- Honoring and exalting God with praise, thanksgiving, and humility
- Singing, praying, reading God's Word
- Reflecting on God's Word

## Slide 12

**What is Family Worship?**

It is a time when a family:

- Expresses love and praise to God together
- Prays together
- Has Bible Study
- Fellowships


**What is Family Worship?**

It is a time when a family:

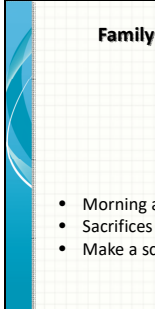
- Expresses love and praise to God together
- Prays together
  - Invites God's presence into their lives
  - Requests Divine protection
  - Prays for the needs of each other and others
- Has Bible Study
  - Hearing, reading, memorizing, and reflecting
- Fellowships
  - Family bonding time
    - Builds support and interpersonal relationship with each other

## Slide 13

**Family Worship . . . When?**

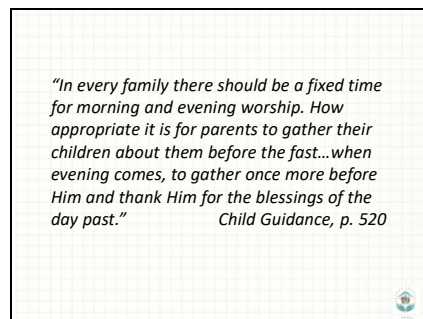


- Morning and/or Evening
- Sacrifices must be made
- Make a schedule

**When should families have Family Worship?**

- Morning and/or Evening
- Sacrifices must be made
- Make a schedule

## Slide 14

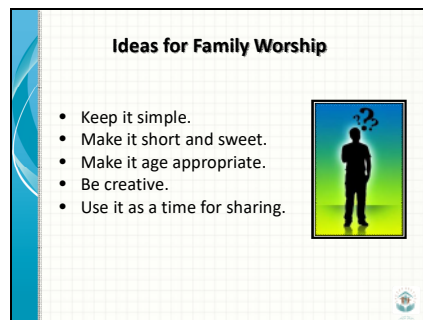


Read quote from Ellen White.

"In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast...when evening comes, to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day past." Child Guidance, p. 520

When to have family worship depends on each family's circumstances. Every family must review their family's schedules and determine a set time for morning and/or evening worship. Family worship provides a forum for family togetherness; it is a time when thoughts, ideas, concerns, and spiritual values can be shared.

## Slide 15

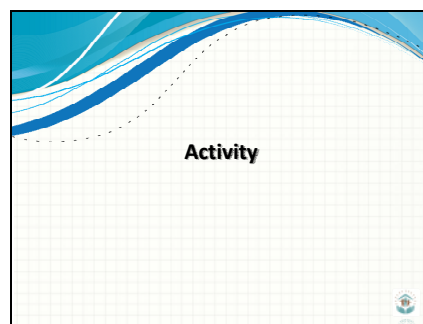
**Ideas for Family Worship**

- Keep it simple.
- Make it short and sweet.
- Make it age appropriate.
- Be creative.
- Use it as a time for sharing.

There are many ways to have family worship — the main purpose being to connect to God as a family and pass on a spiritual legacy. Remember to consider the developmental stages of each family member and cater your worship to the youngest member of the family. Even if the messages are simplified, everyone still benefits.

In today's busy world, making a commitment to having family worship may seem like a daunting task. However, the promise of success is found in Philippians 4:13 — "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." Trust God and see Him bless your family beyond what you could ever imagine.

Slide 16



**Activity:** Divide your audience into groups of four to six persons. Each group should choose a group leader/recorder (someone to write down the ideas).

Allow each group 15 minutes to brainstorm and record creative family worship ideas by stages:

- Toddler/preschool
- Childhood
- Adolescence
- College/young adulthood
- Intergenerational
- Have groups share their ideas.

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Willie Oliver, PhD, and Elaine Oliver, MA, are directors of the Department of Family Ministries at the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



## *The Canary*

By Lidia Stolyar

***Recommended Visual Aid: A toy canary or yellow bird and a bird cage.***

When Luda was twelve, she got a present. A canary! She was so happy! She spent the whole day near the cage with the canary listening to him singing. Luda named the bird Dick.

Luda thought it was a pity to keep the canary in a cage all the time so sometimes she let him fly. But one day the bird flew out the window and never returned to his cage. This made Luda very sad. Luda kept looking for Dick. She looked everywhere, but in vain. Dick was not to be found.

One morning a neighbor who knew about the disappearance, called Luda and said that she thought she might know where Dick was. She led Luda to the well. They came to the lip of the well and looked in. Inside the well was dark and cool.

"Listen!" the neighbor said. Luda listened and heard a weak "tweet-tweet!"

"It's Dick! He is here! We must rescue him!" Luda cried and ran to find her dad.

"Dad, Dick is in the well! Will you help me get him?"

"I think this might be impossible." Luda dad said, "I don't have a ladder long enough to reach Dick."

"But you can't leave Dick in the well! Daddy, let me go down in a bucket and I can get him! Luda cried."

"You can't, my dear! It is too dangerous," her father said.

"But we have to try!" Luda insisted. "It is the right thing to try and save Dick."

She continued to try and persuade her dad. Finally her father went with her to the well.

"Are you sure that you can do it?" asked her father.

"Yes, yes! I can do it. Do you hear? Dick is calling me!"

Luda got into the bucket. Her dad tied the rope tightly around his daughter and to the bucket so she should not slip out of the bucket and then he gently lowered the bucket with the girl into the well.

"Dick! Dick! called Luda. Finally she saw the bird clutching the side of the well. She reached out and grabbed the bird.

"I got Dick, daddy! Lift me!"

Carefully, with trembling hands, dad pulled them into the sunlight. How he admired his brave girl! He hugged and kissed her.

"Were you afraid? the father asked.

"Of course not, Daddy! I knew you were holding the rope.

"It's great that you trusted me. I want you to trust our Heavenly Father just as you trusted me.

God always keeps us firmly in His hands, so we can trust Him whatever happens in our lives. He will never let us down.

***Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me and the little birds. Help me to trust you with all my heart and to remember that I can always depend on you for help. Amen.***

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Story adapted from Maxwell, A. (1964). "A Brave Little Girl," *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories, vol. 5*. Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald.

Lidia Stolyar is the Director of Family Ministries for the Euro-Asia Division.



## *Reaching the Gift*

By Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

*This story coincides with the sermon: **Clasp My Hand Lord***

**Recommended Visual Aid: Small toy to be placed on a high, out-of-reach place before your children's story. An adult volunteer – someone tall enough to reach out-of-reach gift.**

I would like to give a gift to someone. I need someone who thinks he or she can jump very high. Who wants to volunteer? (*Select a volunteer*). I will allow you some "practice jumps". (*Allow the volunteer to display 2 or 3 practice jumps.*)

(*Point to the gift that is out of reach.*) Now that you have practiced jumping, let's see if you can jump high enough to reach the gift? (*Undoubtedly, the child will try but will be unable to grasp the gift.*)

I want to introduce you to a friend of mine. (*Call your adult volunteer to come up and introduce him or her to the child volunteer.*) If you ask my friend for help, you will be able to reach the gift. (*Have your "friend" lift the volunteer child high enough to reach the gift.*) Ask all the children: Why do you think [*child volunteer*] couldn't get the gift by himself or herself? (*Let a few children respond.*) The Bible tells us that we are "short": "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). I have a friend named Jesus who will be glad to help any of you reach the gift of eternal life; and as simply as [*child volunteer*] asked [*adult*

*volunteer*] – you can ask Jesus to help you reach the gift of eternal life. All you have to do is ask Him – it is that simple.

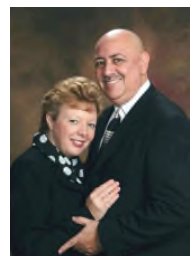
The gift of eternal life is the special gift God promises everyone who obeys Him and worships Him. When we have eternal life, it means we will live with Jesus forever and ever. When you go home today, ask your Daddy, Mommy or another adult to tell you more about God's gift of eternal life.

**Pray:**

***Dear Jesus, thank you for helping us reach high enough to receive your gift of eternal life. Thanks for your forgiveness and your love. Amen.***

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Claudio Consuegra, MDiv (c), and Pamela Consuegra, PhD (c), Consuegra are the Directors of Family Ministries for the North America Division.



## *Cuba's Little Prayer Warrior*

By Linda Koh

**Recommended Visual Aid: Picture of young girl singing and/or children's songbook.**

Yaussel of Cuba was a pretty girl when she was born. She had beautiful long hair and bright, sparkling eyes. She especially loved to sing about Jesus. Her beautiful voice often filled her home and the church when she sang many of the songs that she had learned in Sabbath School.

One day while Yaussel was playing, she suddenly felt great pain all over her body and it ached so badly. She began to wonder what was happening to her body. It had never felt like this before?

"Oh, Mama, it's painful! It's painful! Help! Help!" cried Yaussel helplessly.

"Oh, honey, what's wrong? Let me rub you with some oil and we will take you to the doctor immediately," Mama replied as she comforted little Yaussel.

The next morning Mrs. Abreu took her daughter Yaussel to the hospital. It seemed like a very long day at the hospital as Yaussel had to go through a series of many tests.

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Abreu," the doctor began, "Your daughter suffers from a very rare disease called Periarthritis Nodosa," he continued.

"What's that? What does this mean for Yaussel, Doctor?" Mama asked sorrowfully, "It's just not fair for my little girl!"

"I am really very sorry," the doctor replied, "it only happens to one child in many thousands."

"There will be inflammation of her blood vessels that would cause them to become swollen. So she will always have lots of pain all over her body," the doctor explained carefully.

For weeks Mama cried and cried, and Yaussel could see great sadness on her Mama's face. But one day Mama was in for a surprise.

"Mama, can we pray to Jesus to ask Him to heal me?" asked Yaussel eagerly, "I know He will heal me."

"Oh, yes, my girl, Jesus will hear us!" Mama replied confidently.

Yaussel prayed to Jesus every day. She knew Jesus loved her and would heal her according to His will. Some days she would feel great, but other days she would suffer severe pain all over her body. But Yaussel found another secret of joy!

"Mama, can we go to 'My Story Hour' tonight?" asked Yausssel excitedly.

"Sister said we could learn a lot more about the Bible," she continued.

"Of course, dear, but are you sure you can take it? Will you be alright sitting for one hour?" replied Mother with some concern.

"I will be okay, Mama! Jesus will take care of me when I am studying His Word," beamed Yausssel.

Yausssel enjoyed praying to Jesus and looking up Bible verses and reading from the Bible whenever she could. When she felt better, she would accompany her mama and older sister to 'My Story Hour' and also to the weekly Bible study small group in her home town of Matanzas.

"I love the Bible stories! They tell me about God's love and His plan for me!" beamed Yausssel.

Yassuel's health continued to deteriorate so her family had to take her to a better hospital in the capital city of Havana. This time she had to stay in the hospital; her stay in the hospital went from days to weeks to months. Her family felt sorry that Yausssel had to suffer so much and

could never really enjoy a regular childhood.

"I love Jesus, and I love to sing for Him," Yausssel said eagerly, "This makes me happy and make others happy too."

"I also pray a lot to Him for other children who are sick like me," continued Yausssel with joy on her face, "In fact, I know Jesus better when I pray to Him and also read from the Bible."

Today, Yausssel continues to pray and study her Bible, singing beautifully in the churches while waiting for Jesus to come and heal her completely from her aches and pains! She found peace and joy in *Reaching Up to Jesus!*

**Pray:**

***Dear Jesus, thank you for listening to my prayers. Thank you for making me special. Help me to always trust you and have faith in you. Amen.***

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Linda Koh, EdD, is the Director of Children's Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist in Silver Spring, MD.



# *Discipling Families to Christ: Family to Family*

By Barna Magyarosi



This PowerPoint presentation is an overview of the *Family to Family* Evangelistic Strategic Plan. This program prepares families for effective witness and helping to grow the family of God.

The PowerPoint sides contain the information for this presentation. If your local church would like more information on implementing this program, please send your questions to: [family.adventist.org](http://family.adventist.org).


Slide 1



Slide 2

### Family to Family: What is it?

- It is a project that strengthens Adventist families by involving them in witnessing for others.
- It highlight the importance of intercessory prayer.
- It is meant to become the lifestyle of every Adventist family
- 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.


A photograph of three people—a woman, a young girl, and a man—sitting on the floor and reading a book together. The woman is on the left, the girl is in the middle, and the man is on the right. They are all looking at the book with interest.

© 2010 by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Slide 3

**The Vision**



“In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God’s people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844.” Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 126



Slide 4

**Its foundation**


- “In the messages of the first and second angels, the work was done in this manner. Men and women were moved to search the Scriptures, and they called the attention of others to the truths revealed. It was personal labor for individuals and families that gave these messages their wonderful success.” Evangelism, p. 435.
- “The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches.” Evangelism, p. 437.

Slide 5

### Its foundation


- "Wherever you can gain access to the people by the fireside, improve your opportunity. Take your Bible, and open before them its great truths. Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart." Evangelism, pgs. 436 and 437.
- "There is a work to be done in this line that has not yet been done. Let God's workers teach the truth in families, drawing close to those for whom they labor. If they thus co-operate with God, He will clothe them with spiritual power. Christ will guide them in their work, entering the houses of the people with them, and giving them words to speak that will sink deep into the hearts of the listeners. The Holy Spirit will open hearts and minds to receive the rays coming from the source of all light." Evangelism, p. 436.





Slide 6

### How it works?

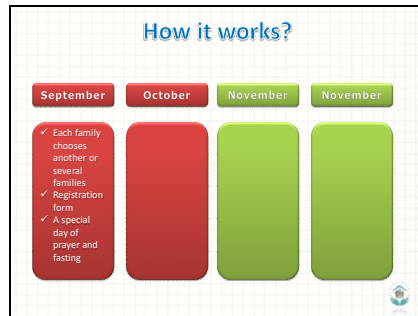
Three phases:



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graph LR; A[Preparation] --> B[Friendship]; B --> C[Integration]
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Slide 7



Slide 8

### Preparation

**Familia Intercedida**

Is de Familiares: \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

**Familia Intercessora**

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

de \_\_\_\_\_

Slide 9

### Preparation

**Familia Intercedida**

se de Nascimento: \_\_\_\_\_  
em \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_  
se de Nascimento: \_\_\_\_\_  
em \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_  
se de Nascimento: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Familia Intercesora**

nome: \_\_\_\_\_  
endereço: \_\_\_\_\_  
tel: \_\_\_\_\_

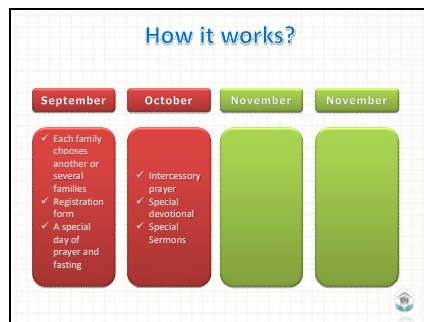
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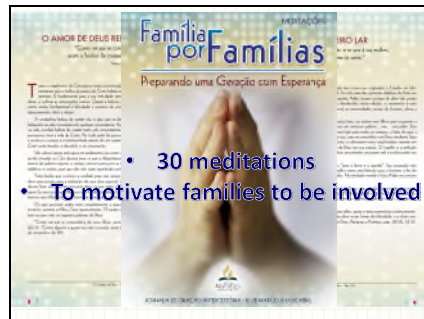
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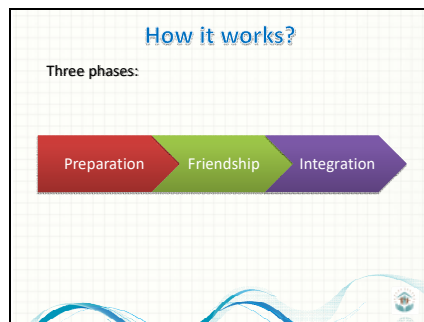
Slide 10



Slide 11



Slide 12

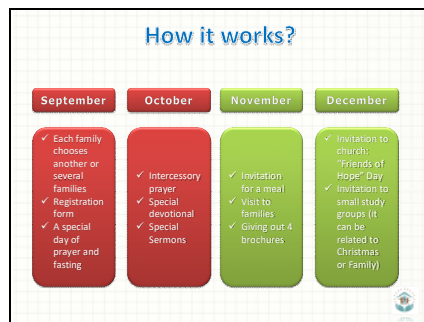




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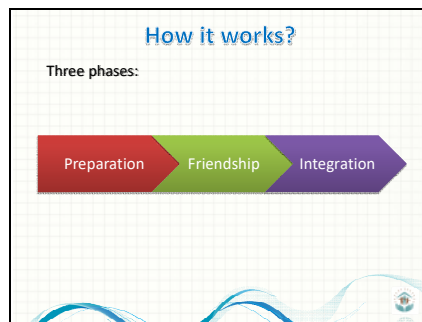
Slide 16



Slide 17




Slide 18



Slide 19

### 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



Slide 20

### How it works?


January	March	May	July
February	April	June	

- ✓ Different activities in the local church
- ✓ Public evangelism
- ✓ Family Prayer Week

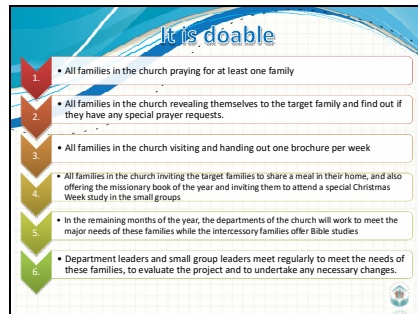
- ✓ Age group and social group specific activities
- ✓ Bible study groups

- ✓ Special Sundays for Families

- ✓ Using the special days of Easter to strengthen relationships
- ✓ Involving the new families in the same process



Slide 21



This presentation is based on a program conducted in the West Central Brazil Union Mission, directed by Pastor Jair Góis, Family Ministries and Ministerial Director.

Barna Magyarosi, ThD, is the Director of Family Ministries for the Euro-Africa Division.



## *Relational Revival and Reformation*

By David and Beverly Sedlacek

Since his recent election as President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ted Wilson has emphasized strongly and repeatedly the need for revival and reformation in the church. His call was followed by a commitment and appeal for revival and reformation at the 2010 Annual Council held in Silver Spring, Maryland (*Adventist World*, January 2011, p. 9). It was refreshing to read in this same issue: “The love of Christ controlled every aspect of the lives of the disciples and moved them to a passionate commitment to His service” (p. 17). Too often when there have been calls for revival and reformation in the past, the result has been an emphasis on personal piety and prayer, presumably leading to personal perfection. This type of personal revival and reformation has not resulted in a passionate love for Christ, nor for the people He came to save. Rather, in a focus on self that paralyzed rather than mobilized the church.

How can we respond to this most recent, urgent call for revival and reformation in a way that will truly usher in the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit? We suggest that the work of revival and reformation must be both personal and relational in its focus. Consider the following statement from *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 37:

Putting away all differences, all desire for supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. . . . Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. . . . The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving.

From this quote, we might conclude that prior to the upper room experience there were contentious differences among the disciples. A desire for supremacy, a lack of closeness in Christian fellowship, a slowness to comprehend, a failure to understand Christ’s lessons, and no felt need to change.

To put these issues in context, we point to the disciples’ failure to be humble before the Passover feast, by refusing to wash one another’s feet. Jesus told Peter:

What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.” (John 13:7). So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and

Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them (John 13:12-17).

The disciples clearly did not understand what Jesus was saying at the time. They first misunderstood the nature of God's kingdom, and were looking for personal glory. Then they were not content to just be a part of God's kingdom. They wanted to be first or greatest in the kingdom of God.

Shortly after the last supper, Jesus was explaining to His disciples that He was going to die, and that they would not be able to follow Him there just now. Peter answered: "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake." (John 13:37).

Jesus dashed Peter's self-assertion by predicting Peter's imminent denial that he even knew Jesus. In commenting on this low point in Peter's experience, Ellen White comments:

When Peter said he would follow his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it; but he did not know himself. Hidden in his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan into life. . . The Savior saw in him a self-love and assurance that would overbear even his love for Christ. . . Christ's solemn warning was a call to heart searching (White, 1940, p. 673).

This comment shares several important elements that work against revival and reformation: First, in our personal and corporate prayer and devotional lives, we make lofty declarations of our love for Jesus, our trust in Him and commitment to love one another, and we mean what we say. But like Jesus in John 2:24, we must have a healthy skepticism about our abilities and that of others, to do what we say and to fulfill the promises we make to God. Ellen White suggests our "promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand" (1942, p. 174).

Second, like Peter, we too do not really know ourselves. There are things hidden in our hearts that we do not know, that lead us to love ourselves even more than we love Jesus. Peter's dedication was obvious. He had left everything to follow Jesus: his profession, his home, and his family. However, he did not understand the real reason he made these sacrifices.

Why don't we understand ourselves? Why don't we know why we do what we do? As much as we want self-love to be replaced by our love for Jesus, this reality eludes us despite our serving God for many years. Is it that we are not praying enough or not spending enough time in God's Word? While these suggestions may answer a number of our questions, there are deeper issues that affect how we pray, how we look at God's Word, and how we do relationships in this fallen world:

First, we are not honest with ourselves about ourselves, and really don't want to be. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The prophet points to our deceitful hearts as the problem. Why is this truth important for us to embrace? Self-honesty requires that we take responsibility for our thoughts and actions. Since the fall of man, the tendency to project blame onto others has been imprinted on our DNA. We must accept the reality that not taking responsibility for ourselves is one of the byproducts of our sin nature inherited from our first parents. Self-deceit is a part of who we are. It is our essence apart from Christ.

Second, we do not know ourselves, and we really don't want to. We think that we know ourselves. We are like the Laodiceans: "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). We don't see our true condition as God sees it, and are invested in not seeing it. It is true, but somewhat simplistic to say we are guilty of spiritual pride.

We must ask ourselves, why self, and our love of self is so deeply ingrained in us? Hebrews 2:15 submits: "and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We must face the reality that we fear dying to self. We have built a life to survive in this world ravaged by the effects of sin. Many of us have built "structures of self" to cope with the pain of life as we've experienced it. Building these defenses against pain is a part of God's permissive will in a world of sin where people who are hurt; hurt other people.

If sin and its effects had not entered the world, there would be no need to protect oneself against them; no need for defense mechanisms. So, when we are hurt and afraid of being hurt again, we harden our hearts. When our lives have been chaotic and seemingly out of control, our fear of returning to this type of existence leads us to control as much as we can of our own life and the lives of others. Conversely, when as children we were overly controlled, we fear being controlled again, and will resist submitting to authority, even the authority of God.

If we have been raised in homes where our parental figures could not be trusted or depended upon, we learn a pathological self-dependence. We have learned that to trust anyone else, even God, is a risk not worth taking since we have repeatedly experienced disappointed every time we have taken the risk to trust.

We also fear rejection or abandonment. People who have experienced rejection will anticipate rejection so much that their fear becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the words of Job, “For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me” (Job 3:25). Or they will reject others before they can be rejected.

A fear of abandonment may also lead us to create a set of circumstances by which we will be abandoned. Hebrews 12:15 suggests, our bitter roots—in this case, of fear of abandonment—spring up and trouble us, but also defile others with our fears. These fears run very deep, and are often rooted in painful childhood experiences. Fear of violence often leads to a self-perpetuating victim structure where a person anticipates or expects to be hurt.

Many addiction processes lead us to fear our most basic needs for comfort and pain relief will remain unmet. This reality leads the addict to find ways to self-medicate pain, frustration or any number of unpleasant feelings. These fears are just a sample of the kinds of fear faced by God’s people daily, and by everyone born into this broken world.

The problem is not that we have fear. The bigger issue is what to do with our fears. The Bible says: “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You” (Psalm 56:3). Like in the case of the apostle Peter, we often trust our abilities to handle the challenges of life, rather than putting our trust in Jesus.

Professed Christians often give lukewarm lip service to trusting God, but our actions suggest we desperately want to stay in control of our lives. The message we give God is that He is inadequate to handle our situation. We unconsciously tell God He is not big enough, strong enough, present enough, or comforter enough to handle our circumstances. By so doing, we place ourselves on God’s throne and take God’s place. This is idolatry. From a relational perspective, as our own god, we cannot have true intimacy with God or with other human beings.

Failure to embrace the truth about our absolute need for God leads us to being slaves to unhealthy shame—a toxic reality that leads to a sense of failure to cope with life’s challenges. Unhealthy shame says “I am a mistake,” rather than “I made a mistake.” Instead of believing God who created us in His image and declared us “very good;” we believe “I am no good.” In the church, this kind of toxic shame is often manifested as spiritual superiority.

We are judgmental or self-righteous. This reality destroys intimacy among the members of God's church.

The roots of these structures often reach back to the formation of our respective character as early as in the womb (ref Luke 1:41 and 1:44). They are deeply ingrained in us. Suggesting to an adult with unhealed brokenness to die to self and be born again (John 3), is like an invitation to open herself to abuse all over again.

These structures have worked well to protect a fragile self from annihilation at the hands of another. Children unconsciously engage in magical thinking that idealizes their perpetrator and leads them to take responsibility for the abuse. They must first have the eye salve of the Spirit (Revelation 3:18) in order to see the truth about their abuse, and see their abusers for who they really were.

One of the tragedies of this scenario is that if we hold on too tightly to the structures we have built, we are in bondage to them. We fall short of attaining the freedom that comes with being a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We miss the power referenced in Romans 6:5 that says: "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection." After death to self comes a new resurrected life. The promised revival and reformation will elude us if we are afraid to die to the structures we have built to make ourselves feel better.

Recent studies on brain science add light to the picture we have painted. Even before a child is capable of conscious thought, he has internalized a set of beliefs about himself. These beliefs are imprinted on the brain much like ink on a sheet of paper. Habit patterns of thinking and feeling are grooved deeply into the brain, and become the child's reality for better or for worse. In order to please primary caregivers, the child often sacrifices the reality of his own neediness, and instead takes on a false identity to meet the needs of others. Proverbs 23:7 tells us that as a person thinks in his heart, so is he. We become what we have been imprinted to believe about ourselves.

We have greatly underestimated the work the Holy Spirit must do to bring about revival and reformation in the church. Personal revival and reformation includes a courageous decision to allow God to come into the deepest recesses of our hearts, to establish new patterns of thinking and feeling—including the physiology of the brain—and then from a position of full surrender to God, live and love selflessly. Remember, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Good news to embrace about God is “that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). He promises that He will get to the bottom of the garbage of our lives, and will continue to do so unless we tell Him to stop. The work described above is essential to “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all of our needs. To seek this should be our first work” (White, 1958, p. 121). “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).

Too often we want to achieve this revival without confronting the realities of our painful, flawed humanity. Instead, we would prefer to commune with God on some ethereal plane disconnected from our own suffering. The truth is, God has ordained a renewal of spiritual life by embracing our humanity.

“Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices” (White, 1958, p. 128). Does this not describe the change in thinking and acting described above? Just as Jesus sought out Peter to restore him, He is seeking each of us today for the same purpose. When the rooster crowed a third time, and Jesus looked at Peter with compassion, Peter went out and wept bitterly. His heart was finally broken by his denial of Christ. In place of his previous self-confidence, Peter responded to Jesus’ third question: “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You” (John 21:17). Peter was reformed, not yet perfect, but reformed. The base from which he operated was no longer self, but a true selfless love for his Savior.

For revival and reformation to take place among the members of God’s church, we offer the following:

1) It is painful to honestly look at ourselves. God already sees us for who we are, and has not destroyed us. He takes no delight in the death of His children, wicked or obedient. If you pray “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24), God will answer your prayer. God has been waiting for your willingness to allow Him in to show you the truth about yourself.

2) Ask God to show you the specific things you are so desperately hanging onto that are keeping you from intimacy with Him and others. When God shows them to you; you must decide to allow them to be put to death. God will not violate you to heal you. He only operates within the parameters of your choice. When you are ready, specifically name those structures that need to die, and ask Him to take care of them with your consent. Then believe God has answered your prayer. Remember, faith is the victory that overcomes the world. If you do not see immediate evidence of a new transformed life, do not be

discouraged. The death to which you have been called is a daily death (1 Corinthians 15:31). It is he who perseveres to the end that will be saved (Matthew 24:13). It is through daily exercise of the will that we are strengthened and grow.

3) If you find yourself fearful of what lies ahead, remember God's message to Joshua and make it personal. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). To walk through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4) requires great courage. God will strengthen you if you ask Him.

4) Before inviting you to surrender to God in a death of self, He will offer you comfort. God knows the hurts and pains you have already suffered. God also knows the hurts and pains waiting for you. The miracle of God's comfort is available wherever it is needed. While often emotionally stuck at the very place of our wounding, it is there God will supply comfort and healing from our pain.

"For the Lord will comfort Zion (put your name here), He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3).

5) Do not be afraid to ask God the hard questions, such as: "Where were you when this happened to me?" or "Why did you let this happen?" Such questions can be a sign of a growing intimacy with God. He delights to answer our questions when they come from a sincere heart, like that of Job who asked some very tough questions of God. You must remember, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9).

6) Relational revival and reformation is not only about you. Yes, you will be changed and transformed. But you are blessed in order to bless others. Nothing brings about spiritual revival like sharing your story with someone else. Remember, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. . ." (Revelation 12:11). Tell someone else how God has healed you and set you free.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all of our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

7) We must create safe places in our churches for this healing to take place. In far too many of our churches it is not safe for brothers and sisters to be honest about their struggles. Church members rarely self-disclose even in our most intimate settings such as Sabbath School or prayer meeting. Many of our churches do not have effective small group ministries. And yet, these are the very types of settings that need to be made safe for our church members to share their pain and struggles, and to receive the blessing of healing prayer. Remember, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). Adventist Recovery Ministries (ARMin) offers a bible-based twelve step group format that is anonymous and open to everyone who struggles with compulsive behavior (most of us). ARMin operates under the auspices of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When we know each other’s pains and struggles, we can more meaningfully pray for one another. In safe groups we can heal together, grow together, and be transformed together.

We hope these thoughts will further the discourse on this subject, and provide some practical ideas about how to put away all differences, all desire for supremacy, and bring us all together into true unity. This will enable us to give the trumpet a certain sound as we share the good news of the three angels messages throughout the world.

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## *Rare Kids; Well Done*

By Don Jacobsen

Hiawassee, GA: HighWalk Productions, Inc., 2011.

143 pages.

Reviewed by Willie and Elaine Oliver

All children are unique and all parents want to look back at their children and be able to say “well done”. Hence the title: ***Rare Kids; Well Done***, the author, Don Jacobsen, has intentionally given to this insightful book on parenting. This book emerges from the author’s heart with years of experience as a parent and parenting educator merged with extensive knowledge of biblical studies.

Dr. Don, as the author is referred to throughout the book, builds ***Rare Kids; Well Done*** around the premise of three desirable characteristics parents need to instill in their children: to be respectful, responsible and obedient. He uses humor, heart-warming stories, past and present data, personal experiences and a tone that is unapologetic and at times very direct as he sensibly outlines effective principles for raising children with moral values in contemporary times.

“Our world needs your kids.” The author posits to parents that having children was the most important decision they made; thus imploring parents to consider the opportunity they have to help their children find their purpose on earth and become change agents in their world. In essence, parents are tasked with leaving a legacy of strong character and values to their children and their children’s children for generations to come.

***Rare Kids; Well Done*** is filled with charming vignettes and some seemingly trivial facts which Dr. Don uses to describe parenting styles in layperson’s terms. For example, he talks about Kudzu, which is a vine that ravages anything it grows on, to describe parents who micromanage their kids. Dr. Don also shares wonderful examples of how parents can fill their homes with joy and laughter and learn to “lighten up”. He encourages parents to laugh off mistakes and learn to distinguish between an accident and a rebellious act. He includes a chapter of five reasons why parents should never argue with their children, but you will have to read the book to find out those reasons.

So often parents think about what their children can’t do. Dr. Don encourages parents to think of themselves as “coaches” whose task it is to help their children envision all the things they **can** do. Imagine how differently we might parent if we remember that

our children today will emerge as the leaders of tomorrow and quite possibly discover the cure for currently incurable diseases! Most importantly, imagine our most important task as parents is to prepare our children to be disciples of Christ on this earth and for life in the earth made new.

***Rare Kids; Well Done*** is well written and very easy to read; its message is encouraging, inspiring, and insightful – straight forward but non-judgmental. It is biblically, psychologically, and developmentally sound, and could easily become the parenting guide parents keep on their nightstands as a quick reference guide for parenting from birth to young adulthood and beyond.

Family Ministries leaders will find it a very useful ministry resource for empowering families in their journey of parenting. See [www.RareKidsWellDone.com](http://www.RareKidsWellDone.com) for more information on this resource.

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## *What On Earth Am I Doing?*

By Pattiejean Brown  
Belleville, Ontario, Canada: Guardian Books, 2009.  
69 pages.

Reviewed by Heather-Dawn Small

I was pleasantly surprised when I first picked up this book to realize that it dealt with one of the primary problems that we as pastor's wives face. How to be ourselves in light of the high expectation to meet the proverbial pastor's wife ideal – multi-talented, able to sing, play the piano, teach children's Sabbath School, cook, entertain and a host of other things.

Pattiejean Brown deals with the heart of the matter: How can a pastor's wife be true to herself, her calling, her wants and needs, and still be a "good" pastor's wife? She dealt with the topic in a sensitive yet direct manner. The Ten Commandment format made the book easy and comfortable to read yet the brevity of each statement was powerful and thought provoking.

I particularly appreciated that Brown dealt with the many aspects of the life of a pastor's wife – personal – including self-esteem, parental, relationships with spouse, children, and church members, expectations of others, and how to survive being a pastor's wife. This book is a survival guide for pastor's wives.

The entire book was focused on building up the pastor's wife. It was encouraging and motivating. I believe that any pastor's wife, young and not so young will benefit from this book. For the young pastor's wife it will give them a sense of direction and guidance, for those of us who are a bit older it will give us the encouragement we need as well as the permission to be ourselves after years of trying to please others. This is an excellent book and a must read for all pastor's wives of any race or culture.

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***The General Conference Department of Family Ministries has voted, to adopt and integrate the message of this document to our work as Family Ministries Leaders.***

## **ANNUAL COUNCIL ACTION**

**Voted 10/11/2010**

### **God's Promised Gift**

#### **AN URGENT APPEAL FOR REVIVAL, REFORMATION, DISCIPLESHIP, AND EVANGELISM**

God has uniquely called the Seventh-day Adventist Church both to live and to proclaim His last-day message of love and truth to the world (Revelation 14:6-12). The challenge of reaching the more than 6 billion people on planet Earth with His end-time message seems impossible. The task is overwhelming. From a human perspective, the rapid fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission anytime soon appears unlikely (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The Church's growth rate is simply not keeping pace with the world's burgeoning population. An honest evaluation of our current evangelistic impact on the world leads to the conclusion that unless there is a dramatic change we will not complete Heaven's assignment in this generation. In spite of our best efforts, all our plans, strategies, and resources are incapable of finishing God's mission for His glory on earth.

#### **CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

The challenge of taking the gospel to the world is not new. The disciples faced this challenge in the first century. We face it in the twenty-first century. The New Testament Church was seemingly confronted with an impossible task. But empowered by the Holy Spirit the Church exploded in growth (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31). These early Christians shared their faith everywhere (Acts 5:42). The grace of God overflowed from their hearts to their families, friends, and working associates. Just a few decades after the Crucifixion, the apostle Paul could report that the gospel is "preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).<sup>\*</sup> How was it possible for an obscure group of relatively insignificant believers to impact the world in such a short amount of time? How could so few Christians be used of God to change the world forever?

Christ's Great Commission was accompanied by His great promise. The Savior commanded His disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). The Savior promised, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and 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 love of Christ controlled every aspect of the lives of the disciples and moved them to a passionate commitment to His service. They sought God for the promised power of the Holy Spirit and knelt before Him in heartfelt confession and earnest repentance. They placed priority on

seeking Heaven's blessing. They set aside times for prayer and searching the Scriptures. Their petty differences were swallowed up in their all-consuming desire to share Christ's love with everyone they met. They were absorbed in reaching the world with the gospel. Nothing was more important. They recognized that they were powerless to accomplish the mission without the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. 2

Describing the experience of the disciples, Ellen White wrote, "Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. . . . Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. . . . The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the Holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ promised" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37).

Christ fulfilled His Word. The Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power. Thousands were converted in a day. The message of Christ's love impacted the world. In a short time the name of Jesus Christ was on the lips of men and women everywhere. "By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 593).

### **CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS END-TIME CHURCH**

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the early rain was only a prelude of what is to come. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit in abundance in the last days (Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1). The earth will be "illuminated with his glory" (Revelation 18:1). The work of God on earth will be finished rapidly (Matthew 24:14; Romans 9:28). The Church will experience a spiritual revival and the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power like never before in its history. Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter gives us this assurance: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). Ellen White adds, "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and his Word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 464).

Hundreds of thousands of people will accept God's last-day message through the teaching and preaching of His word. Prayer, Bible Study and witness are the elements of all true revival. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit will intensify as the end approaches, "Near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of Man." (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 333) and "By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning

will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 612).

There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus, studying His word, understanding His truth and seeking His promise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the fulfilling of the gospel commission. God's last-day prophet to the remnant wrote in words too plain to be misunderstood, "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 121).

**If a genuine spiritual revival is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs, should we not as leaders place priority on seeking Heaven's promised blessing with all our hearts?**

### **OUR GREAT NEED: REVIVAL AND REFORMATION**

When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence and power through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We long to know Him better. The Holy Spirit reawakens the dormant spiritual faculties of the soul. There is nothing we desire more than to have a deep and life-changing relationship with Jesus. The revived heart experiences a vital connection to Jesus through prayer and the Word. Reformation is the corresponding change that comes in our lives as the result of revival.

"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. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 128). Reformation does not manifest itself in a self-righteous attitude that condemns others. It is the transformation of character that reveals the fruits of the Spirit in the life (Galatians 5:22-24). Obedience to God's will is the evidence of all true revival. Our Lord longs for a revived people whose lives reflect the loveliness of His character. There is nothing that Jesus desires more than a people who are passionate about personally knowing His love and sharing that love with others.

### **COMMITMENT AND APPEAL**

As leaders and representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church assembled at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, for the 2010 Annual Council, we give thanks to our great and awesome God for His faithfulness and abundant blessings to His Church since its inception. The rapid worldwide expansion of His Church in both its membership and institutions is nothing short of a miracle of God. Although we praise Him for marvelously working to fulfill His purposes through His church, and thank Him for the godly leaders who have guided His people in the past, we humbly acknowledge that because of our human frailties even our best efforts are tainted by sin and in need of cleansing through the grace of Christ. We recognize that we have not

always placed priority on seeking God through prayer and His Word for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power. We humbly confess that in our personal lives, our administrative practices, and committee meetings we too often have labored in our own strength. Too often God's mission of saving a lost world has not taken first place in our hearts. At times in our busyness doing good things we have neglected the most important thing—knowing Him. Too often petty jealousies, ambitions, and fractured personal relationships have crowded out our longing for revival and reformation and caused us to labor in our human strength rather than in His divine power.

We accept the clear instruction of our Lord that “the lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ's parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50).

We are confident that all heaven is waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit in infinite power for the finishing of God's work on earth. We acknowledge that the coming of Jesus has been delayed and that our Lord longed to come decades ago. We repent of our lukewarmness, our worldliness, and our limited passion for Christ and His mission. We sense Christ calling us to a deeper relationship with Him in prayer and Bible study and a more passionate commitment to share His last-day message with the world. We rejoice that “it is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600).

Therefore, as representatives of the world church and on behalf of our entire membership, we commit ourselves:

1. To personally place priority on seeking God for spiritual revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power in our own lives, our families, and our ministries.
2. To individually set aside significant amounts of time daily to fellowship with Christ through prayer and the study of God's Word.
3. To examine our own hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of anything that may keep us from revealing the character of Jesus. We desire willing hearts so that nothing in our lives hinders the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power.
4. To encourage the ministries of the Church to spend time praying, studying God's Word, and seeking God's heart to understand His plans for His Church.
5. To encourage each of our church organizations to set aside time for administrators, pastors, health-care workers, publishing house workers, educators, students, and all employees to seek Jesus and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit together through a study of God's Word and prayer.

6. To use every available media outlet, conference, and workshop to appeal to church members to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus for the promised revival and reformation.

7. To urgently appeal to and invite our entire church membership to join us in opening our hearts to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit, which will transform our lives, our families, our organizations and our communities.

We especially recognize that God is going to use children and youth in this last mighty revival and encourage all of our young people to participate in seeking God for spiritual revival in their own lives and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to share their faith with others.

We appeal to each church member to unite with church leaders and millions of other Seventh-day Adventists seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at 7:00 each morning or evening, seven days a week. This is an urgent call to circle the globe with earnest intercession. This is a call to total commitment to Jesus and to experience the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit that our Lord is longing to give now.

We believe that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power is to finish Christ's mission on earth so He can come quickly. Recognizing that our Lord will only pour out His Spirit in its fullness on a Church that has a passion for lost people, we determine to place and maintain revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism at the top of all our church business agendas. More than anything else we long for Jesus to come.

We urge every church administrator, departmental leader, institutional worker, health worker, literature evangelist, chaplain, educator, pastor, and church member to join us in making revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism the most important and urgent priorities of our personal lives and our areas of ministry. We are confident that as we seek Him together, God will pour out His Holy Spirit in abundant measure, the work of God on earth will be finished, and Jesus will come. With the aged apostle John on the Isle of Patmos we cry out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

\*All Bible texts are taken from the New King James Version.

## *Prayer, the Foundation for Revival*

By Ted Wilson

Prayer is so vital to personal revival, continued spiritual growth and power for witnessing. According to the Bible, after Christ's ascension the disciples returned to Jerusalem and waited for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke assures us that this period of waiting was one of serious preparation. He says the group "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," (Acts 1:14.) Two preparatory steps for the gift of the Spirit are given in this verse - first, they were of one accord and, second, they did a lot of praying.

Let's review the instruction given to us by inspiration on the relationship between prayer, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and revival. Luke says the disciples continued in prayer and supplication. The word "continued" suggests that they did not merely go to prayer meeting on Wednesday night. With a ten day period between the ascension and Pentecost, gathering for prayer one evening does not fulfill the picture given by this verse. Perhaps we can picture in our minds the disciples getting together every day to seek in prayer the fulfillment of the Father's promise. They no doubt spent time in private prayer for the Gift as well. Their prayers were continually ascending to the throne day after day.

The preparatory experience of the disciples is an important lesson for us. We are not serious enough about pressing our prayers before God for the fulfillment of His promise to give us the final revival that will be accompanied by the latter rain. Believe it or not, God is disappointed in us because we do not nag Him enough about revival and the gift of His Spirit. Ellen White tells us, "We are not willing enough to trouble the Lord with our petitions, and to ask Him for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord wants us to trouble Him in this matter. He wants us to press our petitions to the throne," (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 537).

Repeatedly the servant of the Lord tells us to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit -- she says to pray, pray, pray. Are we doing it? Do we privately pray several times a day for a revival in our personal lives and within the church? Do we meet in groups and pray as the disciples did? Do we hear prayers for the latter rain during the pastoral prayers in the church service? Are we really serious in doing what God tells us? Are we serious about receiving the latter rain?

God's messenger to the remnant church was serious about revival. The following statement from *The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887 (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, page 121) is probably familiar. Read it again slowly, phrase by phrase, and prayerfully: "A revival of true

godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer." What can we do to encourage each other to follow this instruction from the Lord? We can begin by each one setting an example. Let us seriously enter into the experience of praying for God's promised gift just as the disciples did. Let us believe what God has said and pray!

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This article is from Revival and Reformation. (2011, July). *Prayer, the foundation for revival*. Retrieved October 10, 2011, from:  
[http://revivalandreformation.org/content\\_series/12/entries/2](http://revivalandreformation.org/content_series/12/entries/2)

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## *No Need to Be Defensive*

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

A – What suggestions can you offer that will help minimize defensiveness during conversations with my husband, particularly when I am seeking clarification?

Donna—Niles, Michigan

Q –Communication in marriage is probably the most important element to determine the fate of any husband-wife relationship. Effective communication will give you, to be sure, the best opportunity for making your marriage a strong and healthy one. Failing at this task, on the other hand, can rapidly send your relationship south.

Asking your husband *to explain the reasoning behind his point of view* is another way of telling him he is not making sense. So, your question shows a heightened level of awareness about what may happen if you proceed down this road.

If you are sincerely attempting to get information from your husband on the reason for his decision-making on a particular issue, you will want to do it in a way that does not insult his intelligence. Nothing destroys a marriage relationship as quickly as when one of the spouses believes he or she is being disrespected. To avoid having your husband feel defensive, be genuinely interested and intentional about being respectful in your tone of voice, and your choice of words.

One of the tricky realities about your marriage is that there is a history between you and your husband. This

simply means you have baggage from the past based on the way you have related to each other over time. If your communication patterns have been combative so far, almost anything you say will be interpreted as an invitation to fight.

To turn over a new leaf, you have to engage your husband in conversation with all your cards on the table. First, agree on a time you can meet just to talk. Perhaps the time you agree to talk can be after you have had a wonderful time together, such as after enjoying a favorite meal. Second, share with your husband you love him dearly and want to do all you can to develop a kinder, gentler, more supportive relationship with him. Third, tell him you are concerned about the way you talk to each other and that you want to change the pattern of your conversation. Fourth, let him know there are some things that are not clear to you and you really would like to have a greater understanding of where he is coming from.

Be prepared to have a conversation that moves slower than you expected. However, try to be patient, understanding, respectful, and kind. Don't rebut when your husband says

something you don't agree with. Simply acknowledge what he said by paraphrasing what you heard. For example: "I hear you saying you don't mean to take me for granted when you get home later than you promised on certain weekends. The football game you were watching over at your friend's simply went longer than expected." Allow him at this point to tell you whether your interpretation of what he said was correct, and don't get angry because you may not agree with the explanation. At this point, kindly share with him how you

are feeling about what has been happening without accusing him of anything. Allow him to share some more, and keep going back and forth until there is understanding between you on the matter you are discussing.

We hope that *From This Day Forward* you will purpose in your heart to have conversations with your husband that help to strengthen rather than help destroy your marriage. And trust God to lead you to do all in your power to nurture and strengthen your marriage every day. We are praying for you.

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From Oliver, W., & Oliver, E. (2011, January/February). Message 77 (1) p. 6. Used by permission.

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## *About to Lose It*

By Willie and Elaine Oliver

Q – I don't know what else to do with my teenager. Her misbehavior is challenging my husband and me to the core, in every area. At age 15 she knows everything, and simply will not do what we ask her to do. We have punished her and taken away privileges, but nothing has worked. I am beginning to resent her and sometimes even wished she had not been born. This makes me feel guilty, but she is really making our lives miserable. What can we do to get her to listen to us and do what we say? Please help. We are desperate.

Name withheld—Memphis, Tennessee

A – Parenting is one of the most challenging responsibilities and relationships to manage properly and feel successful about. What makes this venture so hard and complicated is that children are all different, they grow up so fast, and are constantly changing from one developmental stage to another.

Parenting can be one of the biggest setups for heartbreak and disappointment, because as parents most of us invest so much time, energy, emotion, money, and anticipation, in comparison with the returns that are often so slow in coming. However, we encourage parents at every stage of the game to look at their parenting process as a glass that is half full, rather than one that is half empty. Put your game face on and get ready for the long haul. It is like mining for gold. The process is slow, difficult and painful, but often rewarding if one trusts in God and put a number of biblical skills in practice.

While we are not sure what all you are dealing with specifically, we do get the picture and offer the following encouragement from Scripture: "Fear not,

for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand;" "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

We also share a technique—*using choices*—as a way to improve your parenting success. This is a great goal, since it is one of the primary reasons for parenting—teaching our children to become independent and helping them to learn how to make good choices in life. However, unless we give them an opportunity to practice this skill as they are growing up, they will never learn to do so.

Successful parents understand children must feel they have choices in the way they respond to any request. When children (this includes teenagers, young adults and even adults) believe they have no choices, they will feel trapped, naturally responding with resistance and resentment. By focusing on what your child has done wrong in the past rather than how she may do things better in the future, will simply cause bitterness because the past cannot be

undone. However, by concentrating on how to do things better next time, you become a coach rather than a critic of your child. A child who has choices gains control, and having control is a prerequisite for being responsible. Choice, control, and responsibility go together.

Children cannot learn to be responsible if not given the opportunity for choice and control in their own lives. By offering your child choices (offering among three good options is probably the best), she will learn the skill of making responsible decisions. By the way, responsible behavior is directly connected

to the number of sensible choices a person has made in the past. Without the choice to make decisions, your child will never learn to behave well on her own.

We hope that *From This Day Forward* you will be intentional about giving your daughter choices rather than having a showdown about everything you want her to do. By changing your approach, you and your husband will help your daughter to be less defensive, to change her response, and experience greater understanding and peace in your home. Keep trusting in the power of God to make all things well.

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From Oliver, W., and Oliver, E. (2011, May/June). Message 77 (3) p. 6. Used by permission.

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