



The Journal

A SHEPHERDESS INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

A REAL FRIEND

A simple friend has never seen you cry.

A real friend has shoulders soggy from your tears.

A simple friend doesn't know your parents' first names.

A real friend has their phone numbers in her address book.

A simple friend brings a cake to your party.

A real friend comes early to help you cook and stays late to help you clean.

A simple friend hates it when you call after she has gone to bed.

A real friend asks you why you took so long to call.

A simple friend seeks to talk with you about your problems.

A real friend seeks to help you with your problems.

A simple friend wonders about your ministry as a pastor's wife.

A real friend could blackmail you with it.

A simple friend, when visiting, acts like a guest.

A real friend opens your refrigerator and helps herself.

A simple friend thinks the friendship is over when you have an argument.

A real friend calls you after you have a fight.

A simple friend expects you to always be there for them.

A real friend expects to always be there for you!

The Journal



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Editor's Musings

Dear Sisters,

Sitting at my dentist's office a while back, I noticed this poem on the wall of the reception room. The dentist had cross-stitched it herself into a large work of art which was now beautifully framed. That was the first time in years that I had been glad to wait in a doctor's office; I used the time to hand-copy the verse.

The message reminded me of you and me as pastors' wives. Many people want us to look alike, talk alike, be gifted alike, etc. Some have asked why we have never published a handbook titled "How To Be A Good Minister's Wife." But we're all different—unique creations of a loving God who made us as He saw best. So enjoy this parable from nature, God's book that teaches us so much about ourselves:

"The birds had gathered, large and small, to set demands for one and all.
A bird of big and brawny size began to speak with raucous cries;
'It's time that we all make the rules for size and shape and proper tools.
Our nests are in such disarray that standards must be set today.
Each nest must measure six by six; you must use only mud to make it stick.
And only twigs from elm or oak are suitable for all you folk.
And furthermore, I do proclaim that all your songs must be the same.'
All forty birds in great dismay began to cry in their own way—
How could they all do just alike when sizes range from owl to shrike?
It was quite clear to every bird that all these rules would be absurd.
So raising beak and lifting wing, the birds began to fly and sing:
'The songs we sing must be our own, and each must build her house alone.
To bend ourselves to fit a mold would ruin each—and make us fold!
So forty birds then each took wing, intent on being their own thing!"

God bless you every one, as you are intent on "being your own thing"!

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God's Relationship Principles for Dealing With Difficult People



Bonnie Davidson

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The biggest problem in the world isn't war, famine, or even AIDS. It's people! Seriously, I don't know how God puts up with us, which only re-confirms for me what a patient and loving God He is. People can be so unkind at times, and since we are all people, I guess that would mean we are all capable of being unkind.

Some people have a way of bringing out the best in you, and others bring out your worst. It might surprise or disappoint you to realize that the person who bothers you most may actually live under your roof. The only thought more disturbing than that is that *we* are one of those people. But some people seem to be unkind most of the time. They just have a knack of rubbing us the wrong way. But God can help us love these "un-lovables" just as He does.

Our relationship with God will determine our relationship with other people. When we are right with God, every other relationship has the potential to be right, too.

God called us to a ministry of reconciliation. To be reconciled one to another, we must first be reconciled to God. And our first priority for reconciliation is in the home. How can we expect to help others if we aren't right with God and our families?

Have you ever wondered why a God who knows our every weakness allows us to be placed in situations that test our weakest area? If we lack patience, He surrounds us with irritating people. If we need to be more loving, unlovable people come out of the woodwork. If we need self-control, emotional button-pushers will descend on us like a plague of locusts, giving us opportunity to practice the very thing we need. And if we lack faith, He gives us endless opportunities to grow it.

God loves us so much that He isn't going to leave us where we are. He's going to help us every day in every way to become more like Him. To the difficult person(s) in my life, I may be the only example of God they meet. Jesus told us that our love for one another would prove to the world that we are His. A disciple is an imitator of the one he follows. Disciples study their master, wanting to be like him, choosing to do what he does, going where he goes, and sharing what has been shared with him. With every step, breath, and choice, a disciple becomes more like the one he follows. The question we need to ask ourselves each morning is "Whom will I imitate today?"

People. God's people. Re-created in His likeness by grace to represent Him to a dying world. To be kind and loving is to be God-like. We can even hasten His coming. How? We are told that by being kind and courteous, we can win 100 souls where only one is won today. And that when Christ's character is rightly reflected in His people, then He will come.

Sometimes God uses difficult situations and/or difficult people to bring about a desired change in our lives. It's uncomfortable and even unsettling at times. It can be life-changing. A changed life is the bottom line for God.

When you find yourself in a situation where you are being rubbed the wrong way, miffed, put out, angry, hurt—whatever feeling or title you want to give it—realize that it's another opportunity to become like Christ.

Let's look at the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4) to discover the biblical principles for dealing with difficult people.

Principle 1 – Be Loving: Recognize Their Worth

You know the story. Jesus was traveling back to Galilee and came to a town in Samaria called Sychar. Jesus could have gone another route, but He had a divine appointment with a woman, a woman despised because of her profession, a woman society rejected. He took His seat at the well and waited. She came, and He told her all about her life. His were not condemning words; *Jesus loved her* right where she was—as she was. He recognized her worth as a child of God.

That's what we must do with those who are difficult or unlovely. Recognize their worth—they are children of God, no matter how obnoxious, sinful, ugly, or disagreeable they are. The only way we can recognize their worth is to have His spirit within us, helping us to see them as God sees them, and to lay aside any attitude we may have that does not reflect His image (2 Corinthians 5:14-18).

Jesus valued her, by speaking to her. In His day, women were considered inferior to men. Men never spoke to women in public. But in Jesus's eyes, she had great value. What value do we place on the difficult people in our lives? Do we speak to them or ignore them?

Jesus not only loved her, pursued her, and valued her, but *Jesus chose her* to carry out His plan. He wanted to reach the people of Samaria—the despised, the outcasts, the rejected ones who would never be chosen by anyone for anything—in other words, the difficult people of Samaria! Wow!

We can be certain Jesus could have chosen other people with better morals and certainly someone with more integrity than the Samaritan woman. It would have made much more sense to us that way until you factor in Grace!

After Jesus pursued her, valued her, chose her, and loved her, *Jesus changed her*. No longer was she rejected. She received hope. She was transformed by His love. It's important for us to remember that no matter who we are, our value rests in the certain truth that each one of us is chosen by God. He has a plan for every difficult person's life, too! And He wants you to become more like Him. Remember, there are no accidents with God. You are where you are for a reason, and that difficult person may be part of your congregation for a reason.

Knowing that we are loved and so valuable to God that He sent His Son to die for us should completely change how we live and treat even the most difficult people. Sometimes those difficult people may be struggling with their own worth; they may need someone like you to show them (or remind them) how valuable they really are.

When we make a choice to love a difficult person, we invite God to work in us and through us to bring about change—to create His image in others.

As we learn to make this principle part of our lives, let's reflect on the promise of Jeremiah 1:5: Before I made you

in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you [my dear Shepherdeses] apart for a special work.

Principle 2 – Be Humble: Choose Against Pride

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

We all struggle with pride. It's easy to view our circumstances and relationships with the attitude "What's in it for me?" We need to remember that pride has no place in the life of a Christian and will lead to unhealthy relationships.

A big dose of humility would probably do us all a lot of good and straighten out many of those "touchy" situations. Paul was familiar with pride and tells us how to deal with it: "By the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought,

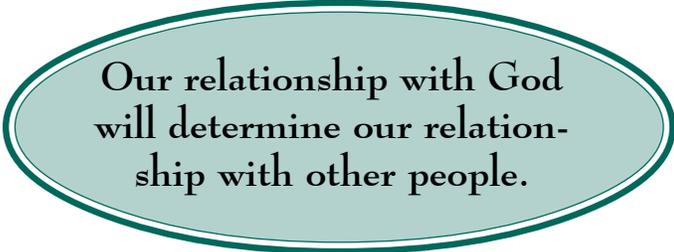
but rather think of yourself with sober judgment . . . We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. . . . Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:3-6, 10).

Why is grace important? Let's face it, when we deal with "impossible" people, we want them to get what they deserve—at the very least, the same amount of grief they have given us, right? But let's not forget that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. "When our lives are lived against the backdrop of grace, pride will die from lack of grace, pride will die from lack of attention." I am so humbled by the fact that God gave me the gift of grace instead of what I deserved. Choosing to be loving when someone doesn't deserve it will often resolve the difficulty.

Paul advises us not to think we are better than other people. Pride makes us take credit for our God-given gifts. Many times the difficult people we deal with find their worth and identity in what they do, not in who they are. So they draw attention to themselves through their actions. They believe that all attention is good, and they will get it any way they can. But they need to know that *whose* they are matters more than *who* they are.

Pride is like a chigger. You know, those unseen little bugs that eat you alive after you've picked blackberries. There's a little poem about chiggers that illustrates what I mean:

Here's to the chigger,
The bug that's no bigger
Than the end of a very small pin;
But the itch that he raises simply amazes,
And that's where the rub comes in!



Our relationship with God
will determine our relationship
with other people.

Pride attacks us in little ways like chiggers through little thoughts or unseen actions; it wheedles its way into our minds. Difficult people are like that, too. They have a way of crawling into our minds and grabbing hold of any undisciplined thoughts, and before you know it, our own attitudes become arrogant and prideful. We must guard against these prideful thoughts, as they will never help an already difficult relationship.

Paul continues, saying, “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body.” We may not think a person has anything to offer in the way of serving God, but Scripture is clear that if they are believers, they are part of the plan and are gifted to serve. Pride keeps us from seeing those people as God sees them. Paul says, “Each member belongs to all the others. . . .” Simply put, we are accountable to each other. Paul restates this concept in his letter to the Ephesians. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). Children don’t always like submitting to their parents’ rules. We parents don’t like thinking of ourselves as being accountable to anyone except maybe to God. But God intended

submission to be a gift to someone else, a willingness to consider the desires and wishes of another before our own. God places people in our lives to see things we cannot see, to encourage and build us up, to correct, to love, and to protect. Jesus submitted Himself to the will of His father to save a world full of difficult people. When we submit ourselves to others, we make a choice that will help prevent pride and make those difficult relationships easier.

Finally Paul says, “Be devoted to one another.” When we devote ourselves to others, we commit our lives to serving. And when we serve others, we are doing what Jesus did (see Philippians 2:1-5).

Principle 3 – Be Accepting: Love Them Just As They Are

“Love each other as I have loved you” John 15:12.

Every parent would probably admit that their child has been a challenge at times—usually during the teenage years. I am reminded of a story of a teenage daughter during one of her “theatrical moments” when she threw herself onto the couch and cried, “Nobody loves me! Everyone hates me!” Her brother was sitting nearby, and without even looking up from what he was doing, said, “That’s not true.” His mother was so proud that he wanted to reassure his sister of his love for her when the brother added, “It really isn’t true that everybody hates you. Some people don’t even know you yet.” So much for brotherly love!

This is where God’s love comes in. It may surprise you to realize that God doesn’t love us because we are lovable. He *is* love. Truthfully, I don’t fully understand it. But He

asks us to reflect or model His love not just every once in a while to the people we like but to every person He places in our lives. Even those difficult people!

Sometimes, we “tolerate” difficult people by imagining that if we could get our hands on them, we could modify their annoying behavior and “fix” them, making them into someone more acceptable. Tolerance says, “I accept you now, but if you don’t change, my offer of acceptance will expire.” Acceptance says, “I accept you for who you are, because of *Whose* you are, no strings attached.” When we accept difficult people, we hand them over to Someone who can change and restore them.

God’s love is powerfully illustrated in the life of Hosea. The Lord said to Hosea, “Go show your love to a woman loved by someone else, who has been unfaithful to you.” He was asking Hosea to *choose faithfulness*, to be faithful to his commitment to marriage and to his God in obedience.

Difficult people rarely encounter such love. It’s too easy to walk away; we don’t want the hassle of dealing with them. The Lord also told Hosea how to show his love: “In the same way the Lord loves the people of Israel, even though [they are difficult] and they worship other

gods.” He was telling Hosea to *choose to forgive* Gomer. She didn’t ask for his forgiveness (most difficult people don’t ask). God asked a lot of Hosea, but God can ask a lot because He gave a lot.

By choosing to forgive, we cancel a debt that is owed. That’s exactly what God did with us, and He asks us to do the same. “Love that chooses forgiveness is the only choice that sets us free from the chains of anger, resentment, revenge, and bitterness. Forgiveness is the deepest need of our soul and God’s greatest gift.” We need to forgive the difficult people in our lives and set our hearts free from any negative thoughts or feelings we may be harboring there.

Then God asked Hosea to *choose to sacrifice*. “I bought her for six ounces of silver and ten bushels of barley.” Hosea was the one wronged and humiliated. Hosea was the one following God, and he was the one called to sacrifice. Let’s take a look at what he was called to sacrifice.

Hosea had to sacrifice his pride. Remember, Gomer was “loved by another”—maybe she was sleeping with one of Hosea’s friends or neighbors. He had to swallow his pride and go to her in love and forgiveness.

Hosea had to sacrifice his rights. Gomer broke the marriage covenant. Biblically, Hosea had a right to divorce her, but instead he laid down his anger, his hurt, and his right to retaliate. He even took the initiative and went to her! Matthew talks about a forgiveness like that when he says, “If you are offering your gift at the . . . and there remember that your brother has something against you . . . go and be reconciled your brother” (Matthew 5:23).

**Words are a powerful gift
from God, and we must use
them in the right way.**

God always seeks restoration and reconciliation. He commands us to look past what would be a logical response and look to the highest obedience we can offer.

Hosea sacrificed his money. Hosea had to buy back his own wife! “Six ounces of silver and ten bushels of barley” was the price of a slave. Prophets weren’t exactly in the top income bracket of their day, so it must have been quite a sacrifice. Even so, he did it. Love pays the price!

Hosea chose two more important things: He chose to restore, and he chose to love the way God loves. He brought Gomer home, separated who she was from what she had done, loving the sinner but hating the sin, looking past her fault and seeing her need. He chose to love her the way God loves each of us. “Hosea” means “salvation.” Hosea was Gomer’s salvation just as God is ours. God looks past our unfaithfulness and rebellious hearts and pursues us still.

I thank God every day for His love toward me. Be assured that He *always* loves us. In fact, there is nothing that can separate us from His love (Romans 8:39). And He asks us to love others in the same way, just as they are, with all their faults and flaws and irritating ways. Every difficult relationship we experience comes to us for a reason—as part of His plan to refine and purify our hearts. God asks us to pour out His love—a love that never gives up and never fails—to every difficult person we meet. God is eternally committed to us and won’t give up until He brings us home.

Principle 4—Be Encouraging: Become Their Cheerleader

“Encourage each other and give each other strength”
(1 Thessalonians 5:11, NCV).

The power of the spoken word is greater than we realize. Words can hurt, kill or restore life. Difficult people are accustomed to being the targets of harsh words. In fact, sometimes they even provoke words of criticism to prove that what they believe about themselves is true—they are broken and cannot be mended. But words can change the course of a person’s life.

I once heard a story of a young man (we will call him Fred) who worked hard at making friends and being accepted until one day he decided to show his true colors. At first he did little things—a seemingly friendly shove, caustic comments masqueraded as humor—the words of destruction grew into a steady stream. Two mature youths were asked to mentor him. He wanted no part of it. One night at a youth meeting, one of his mentors was asked to sing a solo. “Mary” [not her real name] suffered from juvenile rheumatoid arthritis which made it difficult for her to walk, although she never complained and always shared her faith in God and His goodness to her. You *had* to love Mary. As Mary stood to sing, Fred began laughing, pointing, and whispering to those around him. Lack of response to his antics made him try that much harder to win center stage, saying loud enough for others, including Mary, to hear, “Do you hear her sing? She sounds like a frog—not to mention that she walks funny!” Silence. Everyone froze, except Mary, who fled in tears. That did it. The youth leader grabbed Fred by his ear and pulled him out of the room. Once they

reached the foyer, the youth leader let him have it. “Do you realize what you have just done?”

“Yes,” said Fred, “I embarrassed Mary and hurt her feelings.”

The youth leader was furious. “I cannot believe you! Mary has been a real friend to you, defending you when you didn’t deserve defending and inviting you to be part of the group when no one else wanted you around. What is wrong with you?” Fred just stood there, accepting his deserved punishment without offering one word in his defense.

Right then God sent Mary. God spoke words of life through that young woman to that young man. “Fred, I was thinking about why you did what you just did. I realized something. I love you and you know that. But you don’t think you deserve that love, so you tried to kill it by hurting me. It won’t work. Do you know why?” Fred shook his head. Mary smiled, wrapped her arms around the one who had viciously wounded her, and with fresh tears streaming down her face choked out, “I love you with God’s love, Fred. Not mine. And His love just won’t die. People tried to kill it on the cross, but even that didn’t work. So I just wanted to tell you that I love you—no matter what you say or do. I am your friend—period.”

From that day forward, Fred was a different person—not perfect, but different. From time to time, he would slip back into his old habits. But when he did, Mary or someone under her direction and influence would bring him back with words of kindness. The other youth who witnessed this undeserved love were also changed and called higher in their obedience to God.

We must:

1. Understand that the tongue is a gift from God (Proverbs 16:1). We are responsible for managing and using it.
2. Recognize the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:20, 21). Words are persuasive, powerful, and eternal; they live forever in the heart and soul of the person to whom they are spoken. When God controls our tongues, He controls us. Never underestimate the guidance you give or the direction your life takes because of the words you speak or refuse to speak.
3. Learn to control the tongue (Proverbs 13:3). Check your heart (Matthew 12:34, 35). Guard your mind (Psalm 26:2). Ask God for help (Psalm 141:3). Speak less (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

Words are a powerful gift from God, and we must use them in the right way. Every difficult person will at one time or another hurl insulting words at you, hoping you will lose your self-control. Look behind the mask for the wounds that cause those words and choose words of restoration. Be a cheerleader. Encourage them with words of life from the Word.

It reminds me of that beautiful hymn “Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life!” By God’s grace, let us only speak words of life to everyone—even those difficult ones!



After the Move



Mitali Perkins

Mitali Perkins is the author of Ambassador Families: Equipping Your Kids to Engage Popular Culture and has also written for Christianity Today, Discipleship Journal, Campus Life, With, Prism, Wary Cry, U.S. Catholic, and other periodicals. She also writes fiction for young adults, including Monsoon Summer and The Not-So-Star-Spangled Life of Sunita Sen. Mitali is married to the Reverend Rob Perkins, senior pastor of Newton Presbyterian Church in Massachusetts, and they have twin sons.

Our new home shares a garden with a neighbor who's lived here all her life. On her side, patterns of perennials make their appearance at appointed times, keeping her half in constant bloom. I've managed to plant a few spindly annuals on my side, but they're hard to see in the jungle of weeds.

"Don't covet your neighbor's house, spouse, servant or livestock," Exodus 20:17 says. I don't want any of that stuff. I want my neighbor's instinctive awareness of seasons and space, of smells and tastes, of sounds and silences. My home-grown neighbor has a sixth sense that a sojourner like me can rarely acquire—a sense of place.

Unfortunately, you can't steal, force, or hurry something like that. You especially can't get it if you're transplanted all the time. We've moved ten times in 15 years of ministry. I do my best to imitate Ruth, one of my favorite characters of the Bible. "Whither thou goest," I say. But once I've arrived in a new place, I feel myself wilting, like a shallow-rooted annual transplanted in unfamiliar soil.

So how does an annual survive in a land of stately perennials? I've developed a three-fold survival strategy: weed, mulch, and water. It won't grow the deep roots my home-grown neighbor inherited at birth, but it does help me "bloom where I'm planted."

Weed

A crucial task in transplanting comes before leaving the old soil. It's important to make a clean, straightforward break with most of our responsibilities and relationships. Some of them will continue for a lifetime. But it's tough to start in a new place if we're unable to say a few firm and final goodbyes.

I learned this lesson the hard way. When we moved because of my husband's new call, I was in the middle of an unfinished project. I assured my coworker that I'd continue participating, even from far away. Unfortunately, because of obligations in our new place, I simply didn't have the time or energy to work on the project. Each time I had to tell my ex-colleague that I couldn't meet a deadline, the tension grew. A definite ending in responsibilities, although painful, would have been easier for both of us.

It may be even harder to be ruthless when it comes to relationships. I love the rush of gratitude that fills my heart at a farewell party given in our honor. I bubble over with extravagant gestures. "Come and visit us," I told a large group once. Just as we were struggling to get settled, an acquaintance who'd been at that party called, "We're planning to be in town for a week. Any chance we can crash at your place?"

Suddenly, I knew how shallow my invitation had been. Stressed out, grumbling under my breath, I grudgingly got our guest room ready. Those guests ended up bringing unexpected blessings, of course, but I had deliberately misled them by masquerading as a paragon of hospitality.

In each place that we live, I do make a few lifelong, replenishing friendships I take wherever I go, staying close through phone calls, letters, and prayer. “Come and see us,” I insist after that last hug. And both of us know I mean it. For the rest, a simple, honest goodbye suffices. “Thank you for what you’ve meant to me,” I say. “God used you in my life.”

Mulch

The essence of mulching is to improve the quality of the soil. When I first move to a new community, I take a back seat and let the old-timers manage it. Now I realize that my own survival depends on the quality of the community around me. But before I try to change anything, the first thing for me to do is to discover what it’s made of.

A practical way to do this is to walk the town. In each new town, I take my daily walk through the neighborhoods surrounding my home. In the town center I linger, reading restaurant menus and studying window displays. I check out houses, open spaces, post offices, parks, schools, churches, synagogues, cemeteries, garden stores, and libraries—especially libraries. The choice of books, the way they’re displayed, other activities and services on site, and the overall ambience tell a lot about the people of the town.

Newcomers have one advantage. We see things long-termers ignore or take for granted. We have ideas about how the community can be improved; we bring fresh experience and new vision. Some newcomers organize tree-planting efforts or spearhead park cleanups—addressing practical problems their neighbors may have tolerated for years.

But we can also make a difference emotionally or spiritually. My friend Jane, for example, realized quickly that several young mothers were struggling with parenting issues. She started a small group for mothers in her new town.

Investing in the quality of communal life around us is one of the best ways to feel more at home. God knew that when He made us stewards of the planet. We start by caring about the corner of the planet that is now our home.

Water

Perennials are hardy; some can even survive times of drought because their roots go deep. Annuals, on the other hand, are fragile. The only way they’ll bloom is if their shallow roots get lots of



water. Likewise, those of us who are transplanted need a constant, steady supply of spiritual nourishment.

Refreshment on Sundays with your new church family is crucial, but so is that daily drink. I like to write in my journal and read my Bible in the evenings. After this move, I surprised myself by the pages and pages I filled with the feelings of loss. Was this me—the hardened veteran of unpacking boxes, the champion navigator of new grocery store aisles, and the queen of the forwarding address? The adventurous streak that had taken me around the globe was failing me; I was sick and tired of moving.

Instead of condemning myself for complaining, I let the grief pour through my pen onto the empty pages over yet another set of goodbyes. Then I gathered the strength to move from confession to thanksgiving. I knew that the One who had “nowhere to lay His head” understood exactly how I was feeling. He is the Friend who goes with me from place to place, the One who knows my past without any explanation or introduction. Through that daily time of confession and communion, He untangled my worries, received and healed my grief, and accepted my feeble attempts at thanksgiving. Each day I left with enough living water to deepen my roots a bit more.

Wait

A few months after a move, I take stock of my life. I’ve weeded the clutter and made a clean start; I’ve begun to improve the soil; I’ve watered my roots faithfully. The good news is that I’m surviving.

And then the miracle happens. My sense of direction develops so that I don’t have to grope for a map at every traffic light. Friendships move beyond the “getting-to-know-your-past” phase to the more relaxed “enjoying-the-present” zone. A routine of sorts is in place; a few projects have been completed successfully; a goal or two has been achieved. I’m starting to feel at home.

One afternoon, my neighbor and I are outside, pruning and weeding and chatting. A wave of her perennials is in full bloom, and my annuals are beginning to flower beside them. By now I’ve confessed my envy of her sense of place, and she’s told me her secret desire to start a new, exotic life. Suddenly, she takes me by the hand and pulls me back. Side-by-side we squint in the sunshine and survey our shared flower bed.

“Take a look at that!” she says.

I obey, and am overcome with thanksgiving. It doesn’t matter that we didn’t meet in the winter to order seeds and plan a color scheme. It doesn’t matter that she’s an old-timer and I’m a newcomer. The garden between our houses is bursting with coordinated color, reminding us that one thoughtful, well-ordered Gardener was in charge all along.



Bubbles from the Fishbowl

Alice Peck

Alice Peck writes from the Mid-American Union.

Hi Sisters! How are things in your Fishbowl? I substituted at the school during the last couple of weeks, and the sixth graders were studying fish. Did you know that some fish (sharks and rays) don't have swim bladders, and if they stop moving, they sink! Well, there are times we like and need to float a bit in our bowls, but most of us are like the fish with no swim bladders; we must keep moving. Spiritually speaking, we will sink if we don't keep moving in devotions, prayers, and outreach. I usually say "keep swimming" at the end of an article, and now I know scientifically how that works!

Some of you may be feeling overwhelmed; you just want to float around (or maybe away). You need to do something—call someone, reach out to another, get some help, do less in some areas. (Yes, doing less may be "moving" to stay afloat.) If you don't have a prayer partner, get one. Simplify your life. Purchasing store-bought bread and frozen prepared food for a while is not the end of the world! Spend time in prayer for others.

We are moving toward the extra-busy holiday season, and I have been thinking about thankfulness and joy; I believe the two are vitally connected. Recently, I received an e-mail with some thought-provoking words:

- Be thankful your clothes are a little tight—it means you have plenty to eat.

- Be thankful you are tired at the end of a day of work—it means you have a job or family.
- Be thankful you have sick, cranky, or annoying children—you have precious ones to love.
- Be thankful your utility bills are increasing—it means you have heat and a home.

Sometimes we need to readjust our thankfulness level. We need to be thankful for less obvious reasons. Thankfulness leads to joyfulness, and we all want joy in our lives. Jesus wants joy in our lives. He wants us to live abundant lives; He does not want us to merely exist in our fish bowls, simply floating aimlessly along or, worse, sinking to the bottom.

I enjoy inspirational cards. I once received one about joy. It quoted a thought by Mother Teresa, saying, "Joy is a net of love by which you catch souls." What a wonderful thought. If we want to draw others to Jesus, we must have joy. The card went on to say that the net of joy must include humor, love, and playfulness.

When we spend time being thankful, our joy grows. It's so easy to forget to be joyful because we are so busy just living life. I urge you to do something fun. Relax and enjoy the season, play with your kids, let the floor stay dirty for a while, look for and find the joy all around you.

Blessings to you all and yes, *keep swimming!*



Prayer Answered



Mrs. Swarnalatha S. Raju

Mrs. Raju is the office secretary at the Western India Union office in Pune, India. Her husband is the treasurer at the Adventist Media Centre. They have two children, Raul and Shruti.

The following incident occurred a few years ago while we were in Bombay. My children were quite small then. My son was 4 years old and my daughter was 1 year old. My son, Raul, who from an early age wanted to become a pastor, would carry his Bible to church and sit in the front row. He enjoyed the choir and loved to watch the pianist at the keyboard.

One Saturday Raul became very ill with fever. During church we rushed him to the hospital. The doctors checked him and gave him some medicine. His temperature was already 104° F. I was frantic with worry as my mind did a flashback. When he was about 3 years old, he had gotten a high fever, had convulsions, and stopped breathing. My family and I had nearly given up hope then, but miraculously, he recovered after prompt treatment. Now I was worried that he would get convulsions again. The doctor assured me that he had given my son a very strong medicine to bring his fever down quickly. Feeling quite relieved, we brought Raul home. Church was still going on when we returned. I was preparing to give my son his medicine.

Suddenly I noticed my precious child twisting and turning, with his eyes rolling upwards and upwards. I was extremely frightened and could not bear to see my son suffering so much. My husband had just stepped out of the house to get something for our son. I did not have anyone near me when this happened. I began to scream loudly, "Please help! Please help!" and prayed a quick prayer in my heart. Since the church was very close to our house, many people in the church heard me and were in no time in our house. To my surprise, there was a doctor in the church, and he began to ex-

amine my son and told me not to worry. He helped us take the child to the same hospital. Immediately the doctor took Raul to the emergency room. We had to wait outside, but the doctor who came with us and his wife went with the other doctor into the emergency room.

When they came out, they told us not to worry and told us that Raul was going to the private ward. When we went to see him, he was sleeping. While he was sleeping, so many scary thoughts went through my mind, I thought that he would not be able to think like other children, or he would be disabled, or he would never be well again.

After a few hours he woke up, but he was not able to recognize anyone. I prayed very hard and cried, asking God why all these problems happened to a poor innocent child.

Suddenly I heard him call, "Mummy, why did you bring me here?" It made me so happy that he was all right. I realized that God had been with my child every moment. Since Raul was weak, he had to be in the hospital for two and half days. We finally brought our child home and thanked God for His love and mercy on us.

Today this child is 15 years old, and he is trying hard to complete his government exam. He is a very helpful child. He likes to help cook, bake, fix the scooter, or repair old cassette players. If anyone is sick, he is ready with the Bible to go and pray for him or her. Whenever he prays, he prays so sincerely and earnestly that one feels that he is talking directly to God. He has so much faith in God and believes that his prayers will be answered. I am so thankful that God answers prayer! 🙏

From Thief Kalu to Mithue



Shephali Baroi

Shephali and her pastor husband have one son and one daughter. She is a teacher and enjoys counseling and sharing the good news.

Proverbs 23:13 says, “Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (KJV).

Kalu is a 10-year-old boy. No one in his village likes him, mainly for two reasons. The first is that he steals from people. He steals fruits, vegetables, clothes, rice, and many other things. So people call him “Thief Kalu.” Secondly, his appearance is peculiar. His teeth are not good because he does not brush them, and his clothes are so dirty that if you touch them, your hand will be dirty. He never combs his hair. So no one liked him. Once he came to our garden and picked guava. We watched him. My husband went out another way and waited at the path; when Kalu passed, my husband asked him what he had in the bag. Kalu wouldn’t answer. My husband said, “Come with me to our house; my wife wants to see you.” Kalu came with my husband. I opened the bag and found guavas.

I talked to Kalu and explained to him why he should not steal. God said in the Ten Commandments

that we should not steal. I asked him why he stole things. Kalu replied, “My mother tells me to steal. And if I do not steal, my mother beats me and does not give me any food.”

Being a shepherdess, I seized this opportunity. I invited Kalu and his mother to our house the following day for lunch. They came and I talked to the mother and asked her to send Kalu to school. My husband paid his school fees and bought his school supplies. So Kalu started coming to school. He did not have much time to steal. But then he stole again. I called him. He apologized and promised he would never steal again. I told him, “Your name should be changed if you are really changed.” He agreed. I named him Mithue.

In 2005 Mithue went to an Adventist boarding school. Now he does not steal. I hope after going to school, he will be baptized. Maybe one day we will be blessed by Mithue. I prayed for Mithue, and miraculously Kalu has changed to Mithue. Pray for a bright future for Mithue.



Introducing Shepherdess Coordinators From Around the World

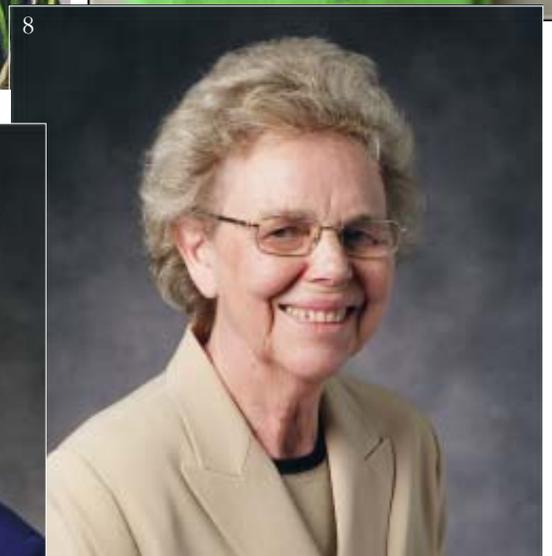
1. Gloria Trotman, SIEMA Coordinator for Inter-American Division. She and her husband Jansen have four children and three grandchildren. She enjoys reading, watching funny movies, singing, and playing the piano. Her favorite memory is when her mom had a doll's tea party with her.

2. Evelyn Nagel, AFAM Coordinator for South American Division. Evelyn is married to Ruy and they have a poodle named Fluffy. She enjoys embroidery, reading, gardening, and taking care of her home. She likes to travel to the mountains and the beach. Her favorite memory is visiting with a missionary boat.

3. Helen Gulfan, Shepherdess Coordinator for Southern Asia-Pacific Division. Helen is married to Alberto, and they have three grown children and one grandson. Helen enjoys reading, singing, sports, gardening, witnessing, and encouraging others. She has a pet turtle and a dog. Someday she would like to visit Africa. Her favorite memories include her engagement, wedding, and early pastoral work.

4. Maeve Maurer, Shepherdess Coordinator for Euro-Africa Division. Maeve is married to Gabriel, and they have two daughters. Some of Maeve's hobbies include baking homemade bread, sports, reading, spending time with friends, health ministries, and being with her family. She likes to travel in Switzerland and also to warm countries. Her favorite memory is her honeymoon in Australia and the many big and small experiences she has had with God.

5. Angéle Rachel Nlo Nlo, Shepherdess Coordinator for West-Central Africa Division. Angéle's hobbies include reading, traveling, cooking, and working with evangelistic campaigns. She also enjoys teaching seminars and discovering new areas. Her favorite memory is her wedding ceremony.





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5. Sally Lam-Phoon, Shepherdess Coordinator for Northern Asia-Pacific Division. Sally and her husband Chek-Yat have two grown daughters. She enjoys traveling, reading, experimenting with foreign languages, and hanging around home with her hubby. Her favorite memory is a family vacation in 1985.

7. Marti Schneider, Shepherdess Coordinator for North American Division. Marti and her husband Don have two adult children. She enjoys studying the German language, writing music and lyrics, and writing Scripture and her interaction with God.

8. Kari Paulsen, Shepherdess Sponsor. Kari and her husband Jan have been married for 51 years. They have three grown children. She enjoys reading and studying.

9. Milliam Kakembo, Shepherdess Coordinator for East-Central Africa Division. Milliam and her husband John have two adult children, three dogs, and one cat. She enjoys singing, gardening, cooking, and reflexology which she volunteers for therapy at hospice. Milliam likes to travel every chance she gets, and her favorite memory is the day she launched her first music album.

10. Hepzibah Kore, Shepherdess Coordinator for Southern Asia Division. Hepzi and her husband Gnanaraj have a daughter and two grandsons. Hepzi's hobbies include gardening, reading, listening to music, and taking evening walks. She dreams of traveling to the Holy Land. Her favorite memory is Friday nights with the family when the children were young.

11. Merilyn Webster, Shepherdess Coordinator for South Pacific Division. Merilyn is married to Gary, and they have two grown children. She enjoys sewing, gardening, reading, camping, and likes to travel by the sea. Her favorite memory is watching all her neighbours help her very weary husband finish landscaping around their home.

12. Galina Stele, Shepherdess Coordinator for Euro-Asia Division. Galina and her husband, Artur, have one son. She enjoys puzzles, home responsibilities, reading, teaching, decorating, gardening, and spending time with her family. She likes to travel to warm places by the sea. Her favorite memories are family times.

13. Anne-May Wollan, Shepherdess Coordinator for Trans-European Division. Anne-May and her husband, Harald, have two grown children and five grandchildren. Some of her hobbies include woodworking, textile pictures, patchwork, painting, and music. She enjoys cross-country skiing and traveling to Norway.

14. Denise Ratsara, Shepherdess Coordinator for Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Denise and her husband Paul have three children and one dog. She enjoys reading, gardening, and talking with her husband. She likes to travel to Mauritius. Her favorite memory is her wedding day.

15. Sharon Cress, Shepherdess Director. Sharon and her husband Jim are the proud owners of a Yorkshire Terrier named Dixie. Sharon enjoys reading, spending time with friends, and cooking. Her goal is to do something to benefit clergy wives somewhere in the world.

16. Wiliane Marroni, Associate AFAM Coordinator for South American Division. Wiliane and her husband Almir have two grown children. Some of her hobbies are traveling, cooking, reading, and walking. She enjoys family meetings and going to the beach. Her favorite memory is her wedding and the birth of her daughters.



Tree Huggin’ Momma



Carolyn B. Ruch

Carolyn Byers Ruch writes from her home in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, that she shares with her wonderful husband and four amazing teenagers. When she is not distracted, she can be spotted each morning by her back door practicing her tree huggin’ routine.

Mom, I’m leaving now.” My son hesitated at the door, his backpack flung over his shoulder.

Wow, he’s waiting for me. He actually wants a hug.

It had been a wake-up call, a two-by-four moment. Bam! I felt the jolt of the invisible board hit me right upside my head. Listening to the radio, I heard the voice of wisdom. “Continue to hug your teenagers even if they act like they don’t want to be bothered or could care less.” That caught my attention. I began to ponder.

When did I stop hugging him, Lord? I don’t remember the last time I reached out and touched him.

Physical affection doesn’t come naturally to my mother, to her mother or to me. I come from a long line of stoics. Proud of our abilities to suck up the tears and pick ourselves up by our bootstraps, we keep moving on, no matter what comes our way.

But I couldn’t ignore the voice of wisdom. “Teenagers need hugs and physical affection from their parents at this time in their lives now more than ever.”

So where do I begin, Lord? How do I begin? He’ll think I’m nuts if I just start hugging him. To be honest, I’m frightened he’ll reject me.

I had grown weary of his apathetic attitude and struggled not to take his eye-rolling personally. All of the intellectual reasoning in the world could not take the sting out of his constant displays of rejection.

I don’t think I’m up for the task, Lord. Oh, help!

But I made a decision. I took the challenge.

It was just another morning to my son, but to me it was the day I was altering the course of my family’s history.

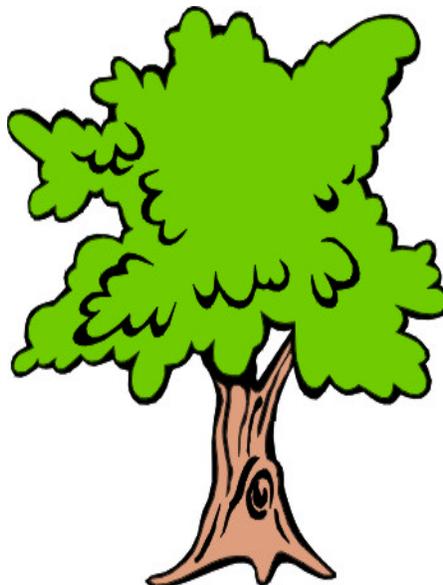
“Luke, I’d like to hug you each morning before you leave for school,” I told him. “I know you may not like it, and it may feel awkward, but I really want you to know just how much I love you.”

He looked at me. His eyes circled in their sockets. His shoulders shrugged, and apathy oozed from his pores.

Ugh! This isn’t going to be easy, Lord.

I reached toward him. He stood still. As I embraced him, his body stiffened.

My goodness, a tree trunk would feel more inviting, I thought. This is going to be harder than I imagined.



Discouraged but determined, I made a commitment to myself to continue the hug “tree-tment” each morning.

Each day began with one goal in mind: hug that teenager before he gets out the door. Many times I had to stop him from whizzing right by me, reeling him back so I could establish my tree-hugging routine.

But slowly I began to notice a subtle response.

Was that a squeeze back I just detected? Did I really feel a touch?

Then one morning, I was distracted from my goal. While emptying the dishwasher I heard a “hmm.” I looked up. There he stood, slouched against the door jamb with his backpack hanging off his shoulder.

Does he have a cold? I wondered. But wait. I was wrong. He was waiting for me. He was waiting for a hug! And his momma was willing to oblige.

Oh, I was elated! My diligence had paid off. The voice of wisdom was right. I sauntered around the kitchen counter, trying to pace myself, resisting the temptation to tackle him and overwhelm him with my boundless joy. I put my arms around him and received one of the most precious hugs of my life.

I peered out the window as he walked to his car and slid into the driver’s seat. As he drove away, I could not contain my excitement any longer. With the voice of a sports announcer, I bellowed as I pulled my fist down through the air, “Yes! She hugs, she scores!”

What a way to start the day. Thank you, Lord.

Months passed. The hugs continued. Then Christmas brought a new puppy to our family, a bundle of black fur and energy that needed to be taken to the backyard each morning. That somehow became my job.

I stood outside one morning in January while our puppy busied himself at my feet. Suddenly, my son bounded down our deck stairs and headed toward his car.

I heard his car door slam, but then it opened again. I looked up to see him standing at the entrance to our backyard, a smile on his face. Waiting once again. Waiting for me. I smiled back as I scooped up the little fur ball and headed toward my son with a big hug waiting to be unleashed.

He got out of his car, Lord. He stopped what he was doing—all for a hug.

I vowed to never again question the value of a hug to my teenage son. The voice of wisdom was right, and I was glad I had listened.



*Greater
love hath
no man
than this,
that a man
lay down
his life for
his
friends.*

John 15:13

Keep Your Eyes on Jesus!



Dorothy Garwe

Dorothy Garwe is an Administrative Assistant (Cultural Section) of the American Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe. Her husband Bob is the Stewardship and Women's Ministries Director of the Eastern Zimbabwe Conference. Dorothy's hobbies are gardening, cooking, sewing, and conducting vegetarian cooking seminars.

“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee” (Prov. 4:25, KJV).

When Peter was walking on the water and looking at Jesus, he did very well. But once he took his eyes off Christ, he began to sink. When he focused on the boisterous waves instead of his Savior, trouble began. He cried, “Lord, save me!” It is said to be the shortest prayer in the Bible, but it was long enough. Jesus heard him and immediately stretched forth His hand and lifted His sinking disciple. What a loving Savior!

Why didn't Peter keep his eyes on Jesus? Sometimes I have wondered if he got such a thrill while actually walking on the sea that he allowed a bit of pride to enter his heart. Did he say to himself, “I wonder what the other disciples think about this?” Did he turn and look at them and start to say, “Look at me, fellows!”

Of course, once he took his eyes off Jesus, there was time for nothing but fear. When he saw those waves, fear gripped his heart and his faith failed. He went down crying, “Lord, save me!”

What a lesson for everyone, young and old. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Don't let anything else capture your attention. Remember, there is a battle going on. How do you spend most of your time? Whatever gets your attention gets you!

“Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. . . . He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 488).

How many times have we allowed pride, envy, jealousy, selfish ambitions, etc., to fill our minds so that our eyes are not focused on Jesus? How many times have we began sinking like Peter did? If we do not cry out, “Lord, save me!”

then these habits become part of us, and the devil will conquer us. We need to keep busy with God's business. At 12 years of age, Jesus already realized the work He would do for His Father. He kept busy with His Father's business all His life. How about you and me? Don't you want to keep busy with God's work? I do.

“Judicious labor is a healthful tonic for the human race. It makes the feeble strong, the poor rich, the wretched happy. Satan lies in ambush, ready to destroy those whose leisure gives him opportunity to approach them under attractive disguise. He is never more successful than when he comes to men in their idle hours” (*Messages to Young People*, p. 215).

Let us look at King David. He remained behind when everyone else was going to an important war. The Bible does not tell us the reason why; it only says he remained behind. I think it must have been deliberate; perhaps he just wanted to rest and do his business instead of God's. He took his eyes off Jesus, and lo and behold, he saw Bathsheba, wife of Uriah. He committed sin with her. The devil uses every device he has to trap us. I like to think that since King David had many wives who were even more beautiful than Bathsheba, the devil disguised himself and made Bathsheba look more attractive to the King than she really was.

How often do we find ourselves trapped in situations which may embarrass us afterwards? When one commits a sin the first time, it doesn't end there. King David found himself using different tactics to cover up his sin. When all his tactics failed, he plotted to kill Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba. And sure enough, Uriah was killed. King David was so intent on fulfilling his selfish desires that he put someone else's life in danger.

It is interesting to note that when the prophet Nathan was sent by God to rebuke David, David did not see himself in the same light. He did not believe he was as bad as

the prophet described. As humans, it is our nature to think we are not as bad as the next person. We tend to point fingers at others while making excuses for ourselves. When we keep our eyes on Jesus, we see ourselves as we really are. We recognize our sinfulness. When King David realized his mistake and looked again at Jesus, he asked for forgiveness and was forgiven. He became one of God's friends not because he was blameless, but because he repented wholeheartedly.

When we look at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we get a clear picture of perfection, love, and mercy. Though we may fall many times, we need to lift our heads and once again look to Jesus. We need to walk boldly as

Peter did. Paul, who once persecuted Christians, looked at Jesus and became a different person. Once you focus your eyes on Jesus, you will not remain the same; you will become a new creature in Him.

"Boisterous waves" are all around us. As long as we turn our eyes from Jesus, we will see them. They come in many forms: love of money, unfaithfulness in all its forms, busy schedules with no time for spiritual enrichment. Jesus is willing and desirous of bestowing His blessing on us. We only have to focus our minds and characters on Him. Until He returns, our goal should be to keep our eyes on Jesus.



My Time Is In Your Hands



Reingard Schwenger

Reingard and her husband have two sons. They are living in Freudenstadt, a little town in the Blackwood Forest of Germany. She enjoys reading and playing the piano.

“A master watch-maker who had contracted an incurable illness designed a new watch that had letters instead of the numbers on the face, twelve in all. If you read them in their order they spelled the sentence: ‘Time is favour’. This man was aware of the fact that every hour that he had left to live was a gift or grace” (origin unknown).

The notion of “time” is relative, and we all experience the time we have been given in different ways. There are moments when time flies and we wonder where it has gone. This is the case when we are occupied with hobbies we enjoy, when we are together with people we love, when we do things that will not leave our thoughts, or have work that we must concentrate on. In other situations, time passes slowly, as if it were crawling: when we have to accomplish something that is unpleasant (a visit to the dentist,

maybe?), when we are in pain when we are worried about the results of a medical check-up, or when we are in a most embarrassing situation in which we wish that the earth would open up and swallow us. For a child, days are often very long, but in the course of the years, our feeling for time changes. The older we get, the more we have the impression that time rushes past us. I am sure that the older ones among us will endorse this. A man is reported as saying on his deathbed: “My life seems to me as if I had only once walked up the street in which I live and then back—and now it’s over.”

Time—how to plan it and how to fill it—has become a problem for many people today. Many people have too much time. They are bored, a feeling of meaninglessness rules their life, they are lonely, and they have low self-esteem. One day slowly follows

the other in monotony. There is no change. These people become dull and depressive. On the other hand, others have too little time. Mountains of dirty laundry pile up, disorder gets the upper hand, the telephone rings constantly, a lot of things just don't get done, and undone work keeps being pushed up. They feel hassled and stressed: in their thoughts they are constantly occupied with the next thing to be done and never get to rest.

Time passes and we have no power over it. The past cannot be relived or repeated. We can undo nothing. To get a grip on time, we try to divide it into compartments: time for sleeping, for eating, for working, for recreation, for vacation. The people in Bible times divided their time into portions: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1).

We realize again and again that it is not easy to organize our time. How often have my children come to me and I have said to them: "I don't have time!" What does this expression really mean? Maybe I don't have the time just at this moment; maybe I will have time later. Or maybe I don't want to have time for their concerns. Sometimes it means that I am not interested in the thing or the person. With the words, "I don't have the time," we show that we have set priorities in our life. Some things are more important than others. Sometimes we do that consciously, but often it has to do with our preferences. The sentence: "I don't have time" should be used carefully and frugally, because the most important time is the moment I am living right now, and the most important person is the one who is beside me right now. God gives us 24 hours every day—1,440 minutes, 86,400 seconds of time. What do I do with it? Do I use it in a positive way, or do I waste it? How we fill up our time depends on what is important for us and what is not. Sometimes God considers that in a different way than we do. If we allow Him to, He may



mix up our plans completely. If we listen to God and let Him plan our time, He will put things in the right order: time for God, time for others, time for me.

Time that has passed will never come back; it is gone forever. Sometimes we have neglected something and realize too late: "Oh, had I only. . ." but unfortunately I didn't. Our time is a precious gift from God, and one day He will make us accountable for the why, how, and with what we have spent our time—if we made good profit of it or wasted it. Nobody knows when his or her time will be over or when another person's will be over, and so God wants us to live consciously and give of our time to the people living beside us, showing them that they are valuable and important. Everyone needs the gift of time from others, otherwise our lives could not function. Maybe the best way to show others that we love them is to share with them the most valuable thing we have—our time.

Lord, my watch has scared me.
My eyes fell on the second hand.
With a soft tick it is counting
the seconds of my life.
Lord, they make me afraid,
those countless moments of my life,
that I have wasted or spoiled.
Because not one will return,
so that I could live it again,
so that I could live it better.

A word at the right moment,
listening silently at the right time,
a hand-shake,
a present,
can change a whole life.
The right thing at the right moment
to discern and in love accomplish,
that is, Lord, what I ask of you.

—Paul Roth (free translation)



"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven."

Ecclesiastes 3:1

What Image Do You Project?



Delores Bius

Delores is the author of more than 2,000 articles and stories (both originals and reprints) that have been published in the 29 years she has been writing. She writes both freelance and on assignment. An instructor for American Christian Writers, she teaches writing courses through the mail. A speaker, she speaks at Mother-Daughter banquets, retreats, and gives seminars on writing at writers' conferences. When she is not writing, Delores enjoys listening to classical music. She is an avid reader of history, biography, humor, and the classics.

We are told that we should glorify God in all that we do or say. I think that all of us would like to be like Moses, whose face literally shone after his time on Mount Sinai when he saw the glory of God.

Yet most of us seem to concentrate more on our outer appearance, thinking that our image is bound up in stylish clothes, brand-name accessories, a perfect hairdo, and manicured nails.

Not long ago, I attended a women's retreat along with 600 other women. They were of all ages and walks of life and from different denominations. Some were young with casual clothes, others, more mature, were dressed elegantly. They were all individuals, with different tastes in clothing, but all were friendly and loving and accepting of one another. Most were believers and glowed with the love of the Lord. Some Mennonites, though plainly attired and without makeup, wore caps like crowns on their heads and radiated the love of the Lord.

Of the main speakers, two impressed me. The first was a well-known author and speaker. Her clothes were in the latest style and as she gestured, her sparkling jewelry sent out shimmers when the lights hit on her rings and bracelets. Although she had a deeply spiritual message to share, her appearance outshone her words, and I found it difficult to concentrate on her message.

The other speaker, however, was dressed very ordinarily and looked understated. She seemed rather nervous and very vulnerable. Her personal testimony was heartfelt and drew her audience in. We listeners felt she was a personal friend; we could relate to her. She was not as profound as the other speaker in her theological teaching, but she obviously loved her Lord.

Later, the well-known speaker stood at a table autographing her books. Awed by her, the women buying her books noticed that she seemed aloof and unapproachable. The second woman was standing in another spot, besieged by women who were anxious to tell her how much they had been blessed by her message. Many of them hugged her warmly, and she hugged them back.

Back in my hotel room after the day's messages, I kept reflecting on the lessons I had learned from these two speakers. Both were obviously believers who had a real ministry. But had the more successful one begun to look on her work for the Lord as more of a career than a ministry? As a writer of articles and a speaker myself (though on a much smaller scale), I was challenged by the relatively unknown speaker who was so humble and friendly.

I was reminded of the Scripture verse that warns, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5, KJV). I had often wished I could be an author of a Christian bestseller and have a huge speaking ministry. Seeing this young woman who was being so mightily used for the Lord, without expensive clothes or jewelry, made me ask, "Lord, help me to be *small enough* for You to use as she is being used!"

It is important for us as Christian women to reflect Christ, to be transparent, and to be approachable! For that is the image we should project, not that of a Christian superstar! The radiance of our love for others will give us a glow that no makeup, diamonds, or famous label clothing can provide! It doesn't matter if our outreach is to crowds in an auditorium, or to women we see in the mall or market place. God can use each of us *if* we stay small enough for Him to use!





Shepherdess International News

EURO-ASIA DIVISION



Pastors' Kids (PKs) from West Russian Union met in May 2005.



Dressed in costume during the General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, July 2005.



Pastors' wives from Euro-Asia Division attending the General Conference Session

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

The Division Shepherdess Advisory was held in Miami, Florida, in April 2006. Gloria Trotman, Division SIEMA Coordinator, was assisted by Sharon Cress in presenting seminars.



NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Andrews University:

Cynthia Burrill, Shepherdess sponsor for seminary wives at Andrews University, and Valencia Miller, seminary wives coordinator, planned meetings for the ladies in February 2006. Sharon Cress presented seminars to assist them as they plan to join their husbands in ministry after graduation.



Texico Conference:

The Lord knows that we have trials and troubles and that more intense days are coming. I believe that's one reason why He gives us so many opportunities to grow and share together!

We recently had the chance to spend time getting to know each other better at a workers' meeting. Opportunities like this don't come often enough, and it was great to see how alike and different we are as ministry wives. It was a good opportunity to get to know someone that I didn't know before and bask in the sweet simplicity of her (relatively new) walk with Christ. I truly benefited from this testimony of a newly-born prayer warrior.

I was uncertain when Rita Stevens told me that we'd be making "pot holder angels," and didn't know if I'd be "into it," but I ended up having a lot of fun struggling over silly

rubber bands as my seat neighbor and I helped each other complete the pretty projects. They all turned out quite nicely and, as I think was the main purpose, we had a lot of fun laughing, passing around the supplies, and just getting to know each other better.

Thank you, Rita, for prompting us to fill our memory banks and have some fun, too!

Submitted by Terri Gibson from Texico Teammates and written by Melanie Troxell.



SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

A Shepherdess Advisory was held in the Philippines in May 2006. Meetings were led by Sharon Cress and Helen Gulfan, Division Shepherdess Coordinator.



Delegates



Women's Ministries and Shepherdess Training Seminar in South Bangladesh Mission



SSD Shepherdess Coordinators in national dress



Rendering special music on Sabbath

Bangladesb Union Mission:



Women observing the first day of spring



Four baptismal candidates taking their vows



Observing International Women's Day of Prayer in Dhaka Adventist Church

Shepherdess Report From Bangladesh:

On September 14-16, 2004, we held the Shepherdess Seminar in South Bangladesh Mission (SBM). We have 13 regular shepherdesses in SBM. In this seminar, all but one were present; Mrs. Dorothy Biswas, the union shepherdess coordinator, had planned to come, but because of heavy rains and natural calamities, she could not.

On September 14, we met for the evening worship and supper. On September 15, Pr. Bibels Halder gave the devotion, and all other SBM directors and officers were present. During the planning session, we discussed ways to reach people and share our messages. We set the goal to share the gospel with 100 people and lead them to baptism. We also discussed how to maintain peace in our families with our children, and we talked about ways to help the pastor. With this discussion we added the "Ten (Almost) Free Ways To Say 'I Love You,'" an article written by Karen Holford, wife of Bernie Holford, family director of South England Conference. The article impressed everyone.

The shepherdesses had already baptized nearly 60 people. The SBM Shepherdess International gave them a small token of appreciation and remembrance. After the meeting we had a prayer band. The reason for this prayer was to ask God to help us to go and tell the good news. Then we had a photo session. We also had a story-writing program, where every shepherdess wrote her experience of going to

work in different places. It was a very nice seminar. Everyone enjoyed and participated. They asked to have this kind of seminar every few years.

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

Below is a picture report of the Shepherdess National Retreat held at Techiman, Ghana: Angéle Nlo Nlo is the division coordinator.



Shepherdesses in the auditorium greeting each other during opening day

Shepherdesses singing "Make Me a Servant"



Ghana Union Coordinator, Angéle Nlo Nlo (Division Shepherdess Coordinator) and translator

The shepherdesses uniform



Angéle Nlo Nlo (center) with pastors' wives. The two on her left are from Rwanda.

The
Lord
Is
My
Shepherd

