

New In Ministry:
Practical Resources for the New Ministerial Spouse



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General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association
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Welcome

Welcome! You are joining an impressive group of thousands of other ministry spouses around the world. Whether you are engaged to a pastor, newly married and starting your first district, or entering the ministry field later in life as an established family, we want to provide you with a few tools—a sort of “what to expect” handbook for ministry.

We talked with pastoral spouses worldwide to find topics that are most relevant to a new in ministry couple—things they wished they’d known at the beginning of their ministry. We hope that this booklet will be a blessing to you and, while not exhaustive, provide you with a toolbox of resources to draw upon.

As you looked over the table of contents, you may have noticed some difficult topics. Ministry is, at times, very challenging. We won’t attempt to sugar-coat it. We are all human. The demands of ministry often bring out the very humanity of us all, and we want you to be prepared for challenges that may lie ahead. And, while there are certainly difficult times, there are also beautiful times of joy and unnumbered rewards for selfless service in ministry.

Each division of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church has a Ministerial Spouses Association coordinator who communicates with leaders at the General Conference level. Likely the most helpful person for supporting you in your ministry will be your local Conference representative, if you have one. We encourage you to use them as your first point of contact.

We are here to support, encourage, and help you along the way. If there is any way that our team can be of service, please feel free to email us at ministryspouses@gc.adventist.org

Please know that you are loved, you are appreciated, and you are prayed for.

Blessings,

Your Ministerial Spouses Association Team

Introduction

The Ministerial Spouses Association: a Brief History

Marie Claytor Spangler was the visionary who gave birth to what we know today as the Ministerial Spouses Association.

Marie was born on December 17, 1920, in Newport News, Virginia. The third of four girls, Marie grew up surrounded by relics of early American history and the beauty of Virginia's abundant wildlife. Marie's mother became a Seventh-day Adventist as an adult after marrying Marie's father, who lived his life as a devout Methodist.

Times were hard in that era of American history, which meant finances were limited. Only one of the girls was able to attend a private Adventist school. Marie went to the local high school, eventually graduating as salutatorian of her class. Wanting to stay close to home, she enrolled at Columbia Union College (renamed Washington Adventist University in 2009) in Takoma Park, Maryland. It was there that she met her future husband, Bob Spangler.

In a 1984 interview with *Ministry Magazine*, Marie shared a brief sketch of their life together in ministry: "My husband and I entered the ministry 41 years ago, right after we graduated from college, where I majored in English and secretarial science. We enjoyed a team ministry in the pastorate and in evangelism until he was called to the Far Eastern Division as Ministerial Association secretary. When my husband was called to our world headquarters, I was asked to teach elementary school. After helping with the development of our church's elementary school science textbooks and later being employed as an executive secretary in the General Conference, I attended the University of Maryland, where I obtained a Master's degree in early childhood education. While teaching I also worked with the Shepherdess section of Ministry."

During this time—through her and Bob's interaction with ministers' wives at seminars, retreats, and camp meetings—Marie began to recognize that ministry spouses "have real needs that for the most part have been overlooked." She cited a study of Seventh-day Adventist pastors' wives where it was "discovered that they have a sense of isolation from, and an absence of, meaningful human relationships" (see *Ministry*, June 1981) because they move so frequently.

In 1983, Marie left her lucrative teaching position in order to devote more time to helping the wives of pastors. She launched a pilot organization specifically for pastors' spouses. She was tireless as she persevered through the steps to bring the ministry to fruition. This included writing the constitution and bylaws and consistently bringing forth the manuscripts to countless committees for approval and passage. While Marie was about the business tasks of birthing the ministry, she consistently traveled with her husband, teaching seminars, counseling, and listening to and praying with and for these unique women who many times serve silently. Marie devoted the rest of her life to supporting ministry wives around the world. She was passionate about her calling and inspired those who followed to try to fill those tiny shoes that left a giant impact.

According to Marie, Shepherdess had six main goals that needed immediate addressing: (1) Training through continuing education courses for the pastor's wife as well as courses for pastors and wives to study together. (2) Resource materials directed at the establishment and maintenance of good relationships within the pastoral marriage. (3) The development of

materials dealing with the role of the pastor's wife. (4) Materials for the encouraging of team ministry where husband and wife can cooperate together in saving souls. (5) The fostering of Shepherdess organizations on the local level that will provide support for the wives of ministers in their fields. Suggestions and materials were provided to these local groups. (6) Above all, the most important objective was to encourage wives to take time for personal growth.

Through Marie Spangler's visionary influence the regional Shepherdess organizations, newsletters, and the quarterly Shepherdess Magazine (now The Journal: A Resource for Ministry Spouses) became a reality. Marie accomplished the goals she set out to achieve and left a legacy for other international Shepherdess coordinators to follow.

Marie Spangler died March 26, 2017, at the age of 96.

Beth Thomas is a freelance writer living abroad with her husband and two children. She is a contributing editor for The Journal. Sharon Cress served 18 years as the General Conference associate ministerial secretary for ministry spouses. She has fond memories of her friendship with Marie. This article appeared in The Journal, 3rd Quarter 2018.



SECTION ONE: The Care and Keeping of You



Your Role

Your Identity and Calling

One morning a beautiful, tall, shapely young woman walked into a conference that I was attending. She sat with a pensive expression among a room full of mostly middle aged and older ministerial spouses. Late in the afternoon she stirred to share. Her voice carried pain as she recounted how she had, with excitement and high expectation, followed her new husband into his first pastorate. Though the congregation was composed mostly of seniors, she was eager to support her husband and 'fit in.' She admitted that after months of trying hard, she didn't know how to try anymore.

Another woman at the conference asked the young spouse what she liked to do and was good at. The young spouse shyly responded, "I love to play my bass guitar but the members certainly don't want to hear it. They just don't know what to think of me."

The responding laughter that rippled through the room was quickly cut short (without a call to do so). Instead we pulled around her realizing that our young sister was courageously and literally crying out for understanding and help.

While this is a rather extreme example from the wide spectrum of responses that spouses may encounter in their first pastorate or area of service, it does highlight some of the angst that some experience in those early months. And it is not only the fledgling ministerial spouses who search for their place of belonging when thrust into a new congregation or military base, or campus, etc. "Who am I?" and "Am I acceptable?" are two of the big questions bequeathed us by Adam and Eve's fall. Our sinful nature has a lasting effect on us – like a frigid draft blowing up from deep within us and, at times, seemingly with the power to pull us down. That is why we need frequent assurance that we are acceptable. That is why we desperately need what Jesus said to seek – a constant abiding (or remaining) in Him and He in us. (John 15:4)

While it is 'natural' to attach importance to what people think and expect of us, (and this temptation may never entirely abandon us until Jesus returns) there are three common responses that we can fall into: greater attempts at people pleasing; developing 'attitude'; or reminding ourselves of our true identity and place of belonging in God.

Your family tree begins with God

Did you know that all of our human family roots are traced in Luke 3:23-38? This genealogy starts with Jesus in verse 23 and moves backwards to God in verse 38: "the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." We are sons and daughters of God!

God has perfect knowledge of you

In Psalm 139, one of the most magnificent and intimate prayers of trust in God found in Scripture, David affirms God's omnipresence and omniscience including God's intimate knowledge and interest in you from conception on. Scientists keep discovering more astounding mysteries about humans. We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made!

From Isaiah 43:1, listen to God's declaration, in all its possessive beauty:
But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine."(NKJV)

By the way, in case you think that your sins disqualify you, read the previous chapter. The first word of this declaration starts with the word 'but' because it follows a list of obstinate disobedience of those He is claiming. A text that used to comfort me when I was a new ministerial spouse - and still does - is 1 John 3:20 (NIV): If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts...

So though it is beneficial to be aware of the expectations of our spouse and the group that our spouse serves, and amid the striving to figure out where we fit in, there is something more essential to settle. It is God's call on our lives.

The calling

The primary call that every person - including every ministerial spouse - receives is from Jesus; it is to a Person – Jesus Christ, not to a vocation or a place; and it is to live for Jesus. "Follow Me." Matthew 4:19 "The God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ." 1 Peter 5:10 "Abide (remain) in Me." John 15:4 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:5

If we answer this call of Jesus with all our heart, mind, and strength, and renew it daily, He will abide in us and we in Him. As Oswald Chambers so often said in his writings, "Be absolutely His."

The secondary call or response to the primary call that every Christ follower receives is to minister God's grace to others – starting with those closest and dearest – one's own family - and then to the church family, the community and through one's occupation.

It has been my experience that I'm not smart or strong enough to keep first things first. Only Jesus working His transformation in me has that special ability! English writer and Christian apologist, C. S. Lewis, wrote, "The more we get what we now call ourselves out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become," (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity). "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Colossians 3:17

Our true identity from God is that we have been created by Him, connected to Him, gifted by Him, redeemed by Him, forgiven by Him, called by Him and empowered by Him. Why not humbly wear your real identity and play your life with zest to the audience of One? And celebrate!

Donna Jackson serves as associate director for the North American Division Ministerial Association and is responsible for supporting ministerial spouses. This article was first published in the NAD New Ministerial Spouses 101 and is used with permission.

Your Spiritual Growth

Dear Pastoral Spouse,

I wish someone would have helped me realize that I, too, was called. I had been reminded over and over again about the call of my pastoral husband. But now I know that the pastoral spouse also has a very special calling. We have been chosen to partner in ministry with our spouse, to walk by their side, to offer encouragement, and to hold them up in prayer. It is a blessed position to have as you hold a front row seat to witness God using you both to make an eternal difference.

*by Pamela Consuegra, PhD
North American Division, Family Ministries Associate Director*

First Things First: Nurturing Ourselves, Our Families, and Our Churches

Pastoral spouses are a diverse group. Some of us work full time, supporting our spouses on Sabbath mornings and at special events. Some are busy with the demanding daily activities of raising a family. Still others are able to dedicate most of their time to working side-by-side with their pastoral spouse. The demands of life often dictate which group we fall into, and our level of involvement can shift over time depending on our own life commitments.

No matter our level of involvement, we are all growing Christians, and growing Christians need spiritual food. What follows are some practical approaches and resources for a healthy, dynamic devotional and prayer life. We need this for ourselves, our families, and our churches.

Personal journey

We know we need to make time for spiritual growth, but knowing and doing are not the same thing. How do we ensure a healthy walk with God? We read in Colossians 3:1, 2: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (NKJV). Here are a few practical tips for setting our minds on heaven:

1. Devotional time: Life is busy, and the time demands on a ministerial couple or family are practically endless. Setting aside a quiet hour or even 20 minutes can feel selfish when the needs of the day press on us. But never feel guilty about the time. Regularly scheduled time carved out just for you and God is the best thing you can do for yourself and for your spouse’s ministry. Try varying the Bible versions you read. If you haven’t tried paraphrases such as The Message or The Clear Word, try alternating them with a traditional version such as New King James.
2. Scripture memorization: Revisit childhood and memorize favorite Scripture verses. As you get back into the habit, challenge yourself! Learn a whole chapter or more. You’ll find all kinds of

free resources for memorizing Scripture. Here is a great place to start: <http://mintools.com/blog/adults-memorize-scripture.htm>. Include the kids, and make it a family affair.

3. Share: Sharing our faith with others has a way of refreshing our commitment and reminding us of why we became Christians in the first place. Times to share include children's and adult Sabbath School classes, Bible studies, literature distribution, and evangelistic outreach events. Find a comfortable place to share your unique talents and testimony.

4. Cultivate Fellowship: Fellowship with other Christians can provide a tremendous spiritual lift. Book a weekend away for a spiritual retreat. Meet a Christian friend for lunch or join a small-group Bible study. Mentor a new Christian. Carve out time in your schedule to cultivate fellowship.

5. Prayer: Martin Luther King Jr. said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." A healthy prayer life is critical to our entire Christian journey. We will dedicate the entire next section to prayer.

Prayer

Why pray? God invites us to connect with Him through prayer. He invites us to open our hearts to Him as to a friend. We are nourished and grow through prayer. We are also actively involved in ministry when we intercede on behalf of others. God will use prayer to change our hearts and to minister to our families and our churches.

Is prayer always practical? Can its outcome be measured? Certainly, prayer is a practical experience. It has been said, "When we work, we work, but when we pray, God works!" There is a wonderful return on the time invested in prayer.

Practical tips for your personal prayer time

1. Make time for prayer. Just as time to study the Bible is necessary and unselfish, so it is with prayer. Set aside time to pray. You can pray during your morning commute (just keep those eyes open), while washing dishes, or while jogging on the treadmill. The key is to make a time to regularly talk to God.

2. Find a quiet place for prayer and Bible study. In some homes this is more challenging than others. Think creatively. You might find that getting up a little earlier than the rest of the family allows you to have a quiet corner. If you're a night owl, you might carve out some time after everyone is asleep. If your lunch hour in the quiet of your car is the only space you can find in the day, use it. Keep a prayer journal to track your prayers and His answers.

3. Recognize God for who He is. Reflect on the wonder and majesty of God. Here are some good verses to start with: John 1:14; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 21:23; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and Matthew 24:30.

4. Confess your failure. Confession is good for the heart, and God happily takes our burdens from us. Too many of us carry around guilt, shame, and fear unnecessarily. God's shoulders can carry the burdens of the world, so give them all to Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NIV).

5. Thank God. Spend time praising God for His work in your life and for His answered prayers. Praise keeps us centered on the goodness of God, even when the present moment might be difficult. Keep a thanksgiving journal, or write quick thank you notes to people who have made a difference in your life.

6. Don't give up. God will always answer. His answer could be yes, no, or wait. Pray until you hear His answer; it won't necessarily come right away. Persist.

7. Meditate in God's presence. Prayer is as much listening as it is speaking. Quietly meditate and listen for God's still, small voice. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10, NIV).
8. Sing a new song. Music can speak to our hearts in ways that words often cannot. Include some favorite spiritual music in your devotional and prayer time. "Often [Jesus] expressed the gladness of His heart by singing psalms and heavenly songs. ... He held communion with heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 73).
9. Pray for your church. You know the needs of your church better than almost anyone else. Pray specifically for the church leaders, struggling members, and also for specific outreach events. Spend some of your prayer time focusing on the specific needs of your flock.
10. Find a prayer partner. A prayer partner can be a tremendous source of strength and support. Find someone you trust who will uplift and encourage you and your family.

Ways to help your church grow strong in prayer

1. Make prayer a priority. Encourage leaders to make prayer a key emphasis in your church. Reflect this priority from the front of the church, in Sabbath School classes, and at events.
2. Establish a prayer room. If at all possible, designate a room in your church as a prayer room. Make it a special spot where individuals can pray alone or with small groups.
3. Designate a prayer coordinator. This person will plan activities to encourage the growth of prayer in the church.
4. Plan regular days of prayer and fasting. Special events that bring the whole church together in a common mission will bind people together and strengthen their faith.
5. Try prayer-walking. To walk while praying is probably not a new activity, though it seems different from the well-known formats of prayer. Prayer-walking is simply praying on site with insight. It is genuine prayer – God working with and through people on earth. It is directed intercessory praying. Prayer-walking helps pray-ers learn how to pray for others, deferring urgent matters in their own lives, and moving others to the top of their prayer agendas. While many believers enjoy communing with God during private walks, prayer-walking focuses intercessory prayer on the neighborhoods, homes, and people encountered while walking.

How does prayer-walking help?

- It will thaw the ice in your neighborhood. A climate of steady prayer can warm the atmosphere of friendship. Hearts opened by prayer can lead to doors opened for God's healing touch.
- It will help you overcome fear of the troubled parts of your city. Prayer-walking provides a way to re-enter your inner city with Godly confidence. Prayer-walkers find that they belong to the places they pray for.
- It contends with evil. Rising crime and open hostility to Christ are energized by spiritual evil. It makes biblical sense to step out from a defensive, fortress mentality and come physically near to the people whom God longs to redeem.
- It brings progress in prayer. Most Christians sincerely desire to pray more. Prayer-walking offers struggling intercessors a stimulating way to stretch themselves in prayer.

Jean Boonstra is the associate speaker of Voice of Prophecy and author of various books, including eight in the Adventist Girls series. She has been involved in team ministry with her husband, Pastor Shawn, for years. This article was published in the NAD New Ministerial Spouses 101 and is used with permission.

Your Expectations

Jesus and Expectations

As I rushed out the door Sabbath morning, I double-checked everything. "Have you got your Bible?" I asked my 10-year-old daughter. "Yes," came the reply. "Do we have all the water bottles?" "Yes, Mum." This time it was my six-year-old who answered. "What about the food for the luncheon?" "Yes!"

I checked that I had my handbag, Bible, and phone (containing music for Sabbath school, in case the teacher didn't come on time), as well as props for a lesson story (in case I needed to fill in). I quickly ran and grabbed a bag filled with Sabbath books for my two boys (because they had to be the best-behaved kids in church), then sighed with relief as I remembered that at least no one at the church knew I could play the piano.

As the Sabbath wore on and the kids and I wore out (Sabbath school, church, luncheon, singing at the elderly people's home), I got to thinking, *How would Jesus cope with all this pressure? Everyone expects me to do the impossible, and to do it with a smile.*

I looked into the idea of "What would Jesus do?" and here's what I came up with:

1. Jesus dealt with expectations all the time! The Pharisees expected Him to follow their traditions and teachings. The Jews expected Him to set up His earthly kingdom right then and there. His mother and brothers expected Him to shift His attention to them because of their reaction to Him (Matthew 12:46). The disciples expected Him to ignore the Canaanite woman who was begging for help (Matthew 15:22-23).
2. Jesus didn't always deal with the expectation by fulfilling it or by ignoring it. His primary goal was to obey the Father and to show His love.

Take the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15. She was a heathen, and as such was not seen as worthy of attention by Jews. Yet Jesus had come to earth to reveal His Father's love for all people. After allowing the disciples to see Him react in the way they would (ignore her), He then contrasted that with heaven's way and showed her mercy, granting her request for her daughter's healing.

Then there's the time He was healing in Capernaum and the people begged Him to stay. He replied, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43, NIV). He promptly left the region and carried on with His divine mission.

But the story that catches my attention most is when Peter was asked if Jesus would pay tax (Matthew 17:24-27). The collectors insinuated that Jesus was refusing to pay the Temple tax and denying His God-given duty by doing so. However, workers for the Temple, prophets, and certainly the Son of God Himself were exempt from such taxes.

Without consulting Jesus, though, Peter said that He would pay it. Jesus could have rebuked Peter and refused to pay the tax on the grounds that He was God almighty."

However, in *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White explains: "While Jesus made it plain that He was under no obligation to pay the tribute, He entered into no controversy with the Jews in regard to the matter; for they would have misinterpreted His words, and turned them against Him. Lest He should give offense by withholding the tribute, He did that which He could not justly be required to do. This lesson would be of great value to His disciples. Marked changes were soon to take place in their relation to the temple service, and Christ taught them not to place themselves needlessly in antagonism to established order. So far as possible, they were to avoid giving occasion for misinterpretation of their faith. While Christians are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, they should avoid controversy whenever it is possible to do so" (p. 434).

I have come to the conclusion that what Jesus wants us to do with expectations is:

1. First follow what He has called us to do. We should not allow anything to get in the way of that. If we burn ourselves out meeting expectations of others and have no energy left to fulfill our higher calling, we are doing the ministry and ourselves a disservice.
2. Be humble and flexible. There will be times when expectations are not reasonable. But for the sake of avoiding controversy, and to possibly save souls by our loving attitude, we are not to stubbornly hold to our "rights" but rather serve in humility.

May God give us wisdom to discern the right response!

Donna Tonkin is married to Adam and, at the time of this article, they served the Griffith Seventh-day Adventist Church in New South Wales, Australia.

Your Emotional Wellness

Ministry May Be Hazardous to Your Life

The other day a large sign greeted my eyes: BEWARE! HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES. DO NOT COME WITHIN SIX FEET! I reflected on some of the hazardous substances that are constantly in the life of a pastoral family. Since it seems impossible to keep a safe distance from these, we find ourselves courting toxins as a way of life. Let us examine briefly some of these hazards.

Identity

One of our first challenges is to discover who we really are. Of course, every person needs to find this out for themselves. Pastoral families are often badgered by other people who seek to make them into what they are not or do not want to be. This is frustrating and sometimes painful. When we know ourselves and know what God expects of us, we do not easily become victims of this hazard. Knowing who we are and being comfortable with the revelation of ourselves is the first step toward maintaining our sanity. We will not be Play-Doh in the hands of our congregation or community. Instead we will be able to stand firm and confident, thereby enjoying a large measure of happiness.

How can we accomplish this? Sometimes we forget that God has given us the solution in His Word. We know our origin. We came from our Creator's loving hands. We also know whom we resemble. When someone tells us that we resemble a famous person, we feel a bit flattered. Who does not like to identify with fame and success? We know our origin. We were made in "His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). We are unique objects of God's creation; even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matt. 10:30).

The picture gets better. I invite you to revel in this text with me: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isa. 49:16). My loving Father has me ever before Him. I am engraved in His palms. This is not a scratched out note. This is not an unintelligible scribble. This is an engraving in my Lord's palms. This represents a depth of our relationship, a permanent connection. I am thrilled to tears by this realization. But that is not all. Jesus died for me. So who am I? I am God's child and an object of His everlasting love. Now that I know who I am, I will not allow myself to be tortured by feelings of inferiority and the lack of identity.

Over-commitment

"I am so tired all the time. I just do not seem to be able to meet all of my appointments." This was the comment of a young pastor's wife.

I asked her what her program was like. It was a whirlwind of responsibilities. She had been in charge of the children's division at her church. She was the church pianist as well as one of the directors of the children's choir. She was also an accountant at a large firm. Of course she had three young children, and her husband pastored a large church. This young woman was on a sure path to burnout or even a break-down. She needed to evaluate her program and focus on her priorities.

Sometimes feelings of guilt force a pastor's spouse to over-commit. We are being unfair to ourselves and our families when we allow parishioners to determine our workload. We know the size of our plates as well as our physical and mental capacities. Therefore, we need to pick areas in which to serve that will not sacrifice our families and our own health. We need to trust God to direct in the areas of service and also to give the wisdom to prioritize.

Emotional overload

As pastoral couples, we are deluged with the problems of our church members. Multiple counseling sessions and committees, board meetings, funerals, terminal illnesses of a church member or two, in addition to our own challenges, can drain our emotional resources. To internalize the stresses and strains of our parish comes very easily. Although difficult, but necessary, we should lay aside these problems in order to revitalize our energies to continue our service to humanity. The young mother who has experienced a miscarriage, the teenager who was discovered to be on drugs, the pregnant teen, the abusive family, the couple with fertility challenges, the father who has lost his job—these are events that overload the pastoral couple emotionally. Here is where an exercise program, a vacation, or just resolving to take a break from these problems will help greatly. Watch a funny movie or get a massage. We must find ways to throw off the cloak of care-giving for a while in order to restore our strength to serve.

Coping strategies

How do we deal with the hazards of ministry? There is an increase in the number of candidates for depression with a combination of factors that leads to this condition. The burden of the pastorate is a major contributing factor. Spouses who feel overwhelmed, sad, tearful, or weak need to see a doctor. If one prefers to withdraw from company most of the time, loses an interest in grooming, or becomes absent minded, a visit to the doctor is recommended. Sometimes what others consider insignificant or trivial may loom as a large, threatening factor. This is the time to see a physician. We must take care of our health.

It is a good idea to identify one's stressors. What is causing nervousness, the tightening of the stomach muscles, or anxiety? Are problems or people draining us of our strength? There must be a method of releasing ourselves from these weights. Put the problems on the back burner. Go out with a friend or two, and find something to laugh about.

Finally, by increasing your intimacy with God, you will experience a renewed look at your ministry. Spend quiet moments with Him. Engage in regular prayer sessions with your spouse. Also, praise God often. I like the recommendation of the psalmist, "Seven times a day will I praise Thee" (Ps. 119:164). This means that we, like the psalmist, should be praising God throughout the day. Praise drives the agents of hell and darkness away.

Perhaps no one told the new pastor's spouse about the professional hazards. However we can be assured of the promise in God's Word: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Adapted from Gloria Lindsay Trotman's book What No One Tells the Pastor's Wife available in digital format at ministerial.adventist.org. Gloria and her husband, Jansen, have served the Adventist Church in a variety of roles and currently work as Family Life educators.

Your Health

Fitness Fanatic

Let's face it. Between working, raising children, housekeeping, cooking, and last but not least, being a pastor's spouse, it can be challenging to take care of our bodies like we ought to. While there will always be ups and downs when it comes to maintaining an exercise routine, here are a few tips that I've found to be crucial in my physical journey to be who God wants me to be.

Have the right motivation

Right motivators are timeless. Wrong motivators are temporary. Right motivators include: obeying God by taking care of our bodies, being healthy and having a clear mind, promoting good mental health, destressing, and being a good example to our children. Wrong motivators include: trying to lose weight, trying to fit into a certain dress or outfit, making wrinkles or acne go away, or looking more attractive.

As time goes on, we may or may not reach our ideal weight and look, but our desire and motivation to be fit and healthy should still be there! We should always care about our bodies because our mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being depends on this.

Choose an activity that you really enjoy

It's your choice, and you have so many options. Don't try to run as your main form of exercise if you hate running. If you enjoy what you do, the likelihood of your sticking with it will be much greater.

You have tons of options: exercising outdoors or in a gym, with a buddy or alone, with a club or from the comfort of your living room. As time goes on, what works for you may also change depending on your spouse's or your children's schedule, your increasing fitness level, and the changing seasons. Bottom line: Find something you like, and when you don't like it anymore, change it up and find something new.

Set goals

Make them clear and attainable. Now, this is different from what motivates you. Our motivation is what helps us achieve our goals. Goals are meant to be temporary benchmarks and should periodically change. For example, if your goal is to lose 3 inches off your waist, once you reach that, you celebrate and choose another goal!

Sit down and discuss it with your spouse or a friend. Sometimes it helps to set goals together. Goals can range from finishing/ competing in a race to lowering your BMI or blood pressure to improving overall mood/ attitude, strength, stamina, and endurance. I would suggest incorporating weekly/ monthly "weigh-ins" to see how close you are coming to your goal. Give yourself a realistic time to attain each goal, and make sure you celebrate each goal met.

Make a plan

It's all about scheduling. Especially for pastoral families, it's imperative that you work with your spouse's sometimes irregular and unpredictable schedule to find a good time for you. If it takes

waking up extra early or staying up late, do what it takes to give you uninterrupted time when you don't have to worry about watching the kids or the next thing on your to-do list.

Have a family meeting. Decide what time of day and which days per week are ideal. Protect that time, and make sure that if you have kids, your spouse or someone else can watch them during that time. Pull out everyone's calendars and choose a start date and end date. It's best to start when there is a good stretch of time when the schedule is predictable. For example, starting a workout schedule right before camp meeting pitch wouldn't be the best idea. Decide how long you think the exercise routine should work for. Whether you plan for a month or for the year, make sure you take the time to tweak how things are going from week to week to ensure that things work.

If you find it helpful, give yourself breaks and cheat days to avoid burnout. Knowing you have a family vacation coming up may help keep you on your exercise routine in the weeks leading up to it.

Make yourself accountable to someone

Tell someone besides Jesus. Unless fitness is already a reliable part of your lifestyle, you may need extra help to keep going from time to time. This is when it helps to tell someone. Tell Jesus, of course, because we need His strength to keep us faithful, but this is one case where it's a good thing to tell others about your business. Tell your spouse. Tell your friends. Tell your parents. Tell Facebook. Do whatever works for you. If you are motivated by money, put down money for a race, a gym membership, or an exercise class.

Reward yourself

Find ways to make it worth your time. Endorphins are the natural reward for a good workout, but sometimes other rewards help too. Take time to make a workout soundtrack with your favorite inspirational songs. Treat yourself to new shoes or workout clothes. Soak in a long, hot bath after long workouts. Plan delicious, healthy meals after your workouts. Reward yourself positively for being good to your body, and then you'll want to keep doing it.

Make good lifestyle decisions

Little decisions each day go a long way. As you make little decisions each day to be healthy, you will feel motivated to make other healthy choices. Drink more water. Stretch in the morning and at night. Take the stairs. Park farther from the entrance of the store. Play outside with your kids. Choose the vegan option. Skip dessert or juice at potluck.

Let's ditch the excuses and make it a priority to take better care of ourselves. Not only will our bodies thank us, but we'll also be better spouses, happier parents, more effective thinkers, stronger ministers, and a clearer example of God's ideal for humankind. That is my heart's desire. How about you?

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Section Two: Managing Home and Life



Setting Priorities: Time Management

Having the Time of Your Life

Life in the ministerial home involves a complicated time framework. You are "on call" 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every week, and sometimes even during vacation. Often it seems everyone in the world is controlling your time—everyone, that is, except you. And if you let everyone else control your time, you will never bring time under your control.

Just as you wouldn't survive long if your finances were out of control, it is equally difficult if your time is out of control. God places a special importance on time management. God asks us to return only ten percent of our money, yet He asks us to set aside one day in seven especially for Him. Obviously, God considers our time more valuable to Him than our money!

Let me share with you some principles that have helped me manage my time constructively.

God's time and His work

No matter what positions we hold in life, God expects us to invest time in ministry for others. The fact is that unless I plan to take time for ministry, I usually don't. Often I have fretted over time wasted just sitting and talking with my next door neighbor when I might have used that time with her more constructively. By scheduling a lunch or a shopping trip with her, I might have budgeted some time specifically for informal witnessing.

A friend of mine, who is involved in team ministry, has arranged with her husband to keep the children one afternoon and evening a week so that she can give Bible studies on a regular basis. This way, she sets time aside specifically for the purpose of winning souls, and her personal ministry has been very fruitful.

All this planning still doesn't guarantee that a neighbor will never impose on your time unexpectedly. However, I have found that when people know you are sufficiently interested in them to plan times of fellowship together, the idle talk across the back fence generally diminishes in favor of planned activities.

Our families and their needs

Most families would have more social and recreation time together if all family members participated together in the maintenance of the home. Many wives get caught up in the superwoman syndrome. For many of us, the demand for perfection which we began to place upon ourselves when we were compared to others as young children, carries over into adulthood. We want to excel at work, have a perfectly clean house, and cook gourmet Sabbath dinners. And when we come up short in any one of these areas we anguish over our "failures."

Furthermore, many of us have been reared to believe that, "If you want something done right, do it yourself." The important question to ask, however, is not if others can do the job as well as you can, but if they can do the job well enough. Many tasks can be delegated to other family members. Delegation teaches our children and spouses their responsibilities within the family

structure. It also teaches them that they do not exist to be waited upon, but to serve. Each family member should have specific jobs for which he or she is held accountable.

When things aren't done to my standard, I must ask myself, "Will this matter a month from now?" If it will matter, I should correct it. If it will not, why waste the time?

Our careers

For pastors' spouses who have full-time jobs or careers, the dilemma of balancing and budgeting both time and money becomes particularly significant.

Sometimes we don't realize the advantages of the electronic age and the value of conveniences which allow us time that we would not have otherwise. When it comes time for you to purchase or replace an appliance, make the time element a major consideration. Conveniences may seem like extras to some onlookers, but they can give you the opportunity for giving a Bible study. Save your time for witnessing projects, time with your family, or personal development.

If you are career oriented, you may need to hire outside help. It may seem like a luxury to hire someone to do the ironing or heavy cleaning, but it may be an expense that needs to be built into the two-career family's budget. Ellen White consistently relied on other Christian women to help maintain her busy household.

Many two-career couples find that eating out is justifiable when time considerations are more important than money.

Our responsibilities as pastors' spouses

The team ministry concept affirms that wives are called, together with their husbands, to ministry. Therefore it is important that spouses work together to set their priorities for church involvement rather than allowing the agendas of others to determine those priorities.

A discussion about the unique responsibilities of the pastor's spouse has the potential for opening a can of worms, because every pastor's wife relates differently to her skills, time commitment and personal interests in that role. How involved you're going to be with the church's activities must be an individual choice. But let me share a few guidelines for prudently budgeting the time you choose to spend on these functions.

First, decide what church activities you would be most comfortable working with and how much time each of these will demand weekly. If that is more time than you can invest, you should decline.

Second, there are people in the church who will want you to deliver messages, copy recipes, devise games for the church social and anything else that pops into their heads. I have found it impossible to remember all the items that people want me to accomplish or provide for them. When someone says, "Oh, by the way, I would like such and such . . ." I simply reply, "You know, I have a short memory. If you will get me a note about that, I will be better able to remember to do it." You would be surprised how many times an apparently urgent need is not sufficiently important for someone to spend two minutes jotting a reminder for you. So is it important enough for you to spend the time which you have budgeted for church-related projects?

Personal growth and development

Without proper care of ourselves, we cannot serve God or others well. Physical, mental and spiritual growth are absolutely vital. Physical exercise clears the mind and tones the body. After an hour of exercise, I feel better prepared to face the tasks at hand and find that I work faster and accomplish more than I did before.

"Rest is the step backward before the leap forward." Make certain you get adequate rest. That includes going to bed the same time each evening. Don't try to stay up to finish "just one more project." Get up earlier in the morning instead. Rising before everyone else gives you some quiet time for meditation and study. That extra 15 to 30 minutes can start your day with a much better outlook on life.

Regularly schedule some free time. Go to a museum, art gallery or shopping. Visit a friend. Or just stay home and read a book—alone. Many times when I get home at the end of a difficult day, just taking a shower refreshes and adds strength for accomplishing my evening tasks.

If you wish to improve your use of time, it is important to find out where time is being lost. One way is to keep a time ledger for one week. Record each job, what you did, when you did it, and how long it took, in 15 minute time increments. At the end of the week, review the overall picture.

Keep in mind these hints for utilizing your lists.

1. Avoid over-scheduling. Remember that tasks always take longer than you think they will.
2. Prioritize your list. Schedule the most important items for your peak energy hours.
3. Review the list each morning. Add new items as some are crossed off.
4. Evaluate listed items. If an item has been on your "to do" list for several days, was it really important?

Time robbers, Time gifts

Television and the telephone are the big twin time robbers! Think about the times you have walked through the family room and something on the television caught your eye. Before you knew it, twenty minutes had been lost. Leave the television off unless there is something specific you planned to see.

Telephone calls can cause havoc for the best laid time plans. If someone calls and says, "This will only take a minute," you can politely reply that a minute is all you have and if it will take longer, you will have to call him or her back another time.

Just as some things tend to rob us of time, every so often we are granted a "gift certificate" of time. These bonuses can come at the dentist's office, while riding in the car, or waiting for your partner. With these times in mind, I almost always have a book I want to read or a needlepoint project I'm working on. I can't remember an evening in the last ten years when I sat down specifically to do handwork; almost all of my projects have been done during these bonus times.

Think of each day as your personal time account. Every morning you are credited with 1,440 minutes. Whatever you fail to use wisely will not be carried over; it is erased from your account forever. Count the importance of every minute. Just as pennies make dollars, minutes make hours.

As we struggle to keep up with the march of time—sometimes, it seems, marching to a faster beat than we feel we can keep up with—we need to remember how much our Savior accomplished in His short thirty-three and a half years on earth. He took quality time for His family, never forgetting the needs of His mother and close friends. He took time for personal revitalization and prayer, in order to gain the strength needed to finish His mission. By establishing our priorities and requesting the guidance of the Holy Spirit each one of us can manage the time we have on this earth to prepare ourselves, our families, and our neighbors for the soon coming of Jesus.

Sharon Cress is a retired pastor living in Virginia. She worked 43 years in ministry, most of it in ministerial administration. Sharon labored tirelessly for ministry spouses around the world for 18 years. She was the Shepherdess International Coordinator at the General Conference from 1992 until 2010.

Setting Priorities: Family Worship

Simply Successful Family Worship

The most important gift that you can give to your children is a passionate desire to love God, and the desire to obey him, follow him and serve him. We can't give gifts that don't belong to us in the first place. It's hard to pass on a vibrant relationship with God if you don't have your own living and growing relationship with Him.

Children are inspired by the models of their parents' relationships with God, so it's very important that you nurture your own spiritual development through Bible study, prayer, scriptural meditation, etc. Take the time to talk to your children about your own faith and relationship with God, in ways that they can understand. Pray for your family and your children, as well as for yourself. Let your children see and hear you praying for them. Look for answers to your prayers together, to help them develop their trust in God, but also remind them that God knows best, and sometimes the answers come in ways that we're not expecting, or even wanting.

Experience God's grace and forgiveness for yourself so that you can pass this on to your children. Grace is about God loving us no matter what we have done, just because we are His children. This is one of the most beautiful aspects of the Christian faith. Learn how to put God's grace into action in your family, by offering forgiveness and showing acceptance when your children make mistakes or accidentally break or spoil something. Deal with your children in the way God has patiently dealt with you. Think about how God has gently disciplined you before you consider how to discipline your child in a way that will bring them closer to God.

As you parent your children, show them God's amazing love by the way you manage them with caring gentleness. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and think about how that kind of love can make a difference to your parenting and make experiencing the love of God a central theme in your family worships.

Planning worships that make a difference.

Planning your worships is an important key to their success. It can help if you take some time each week to plan your worship schedule and activities. Use your children's lesson guides for the week, or use a children's devotional book to inspire you. Look out for Christian books that have ideas for activities, or children's worksheets, ready for you to use.

It is wonderful if you can manage an amazing multi-sensory, interactive worship each day of the week, but if you start off too ambitiously you could easily find it too much and give up. It may be best to start with a simple, sustainable schedule and then become more creative as you build up your experience and resources.

Scheduling your family worships

It can be hard to find a good time to have family worship in a busy family schedule. Some families manage to have interesting worships morning and evening. Some choose to have a family prayer together in the morning, and to have a longer worship in the evening when people are less rushed.

Praying in a different way

- Prayer is an essential part of family worship.
- Shape your prayers around the needs and understanding of your children. Keep prayers short, and vary the kinds of prayers you pray.
- Write or draw prayer requests on blank cards. Then share them out so that you can each pray for different things.
- Pray for different people on different days.
- Write 'thank you' prayers in thank you cards, prayer requests on stars to hang from a line in your worship area, or prayers for forgiveness on a blackboard so they can be wiped away, without trace.
- Have a bag of prayer reminders and let children choose one reminder each to guide their prayers – such as a toy car to pray for Dad's safety as he travels to work.
- Write prayers of praise with permanent markers on inflated balloons.
- For more ideas see *100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids and Grownups Too!* (Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2003).

Singing a new song

- Use the musical talent in your family to enhance your worship. Even a toddler can play bells or use a shaker.
- Make use of CDs and DVD's of worship songs.
- Remember that teens can be very shy about singing, even in their own family. Let them choose or create their own music, or listen to praise and worship songs instead of singing them out loud.
- Some teens might like to create their own mimes for worship songs, or to put together a power-point presentation of pictures to accompany a favorite song.

Bringing the Bible to life

- Another core ingredient of worship is exploring the Bible. There are probably more ways to do this than there are Bible stories! Think about the Bible stories from a few different angles and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- Think about the lessons from this Bible story that apply to your life, or your family. How can you help your children to discover these lessons for themselves?
- What principles in this story would help develop your children's moral reasoning and strengthen their character?
- Ask yourself what this story tells you about God's love, and then ask yourself how you can help you child experience this aspect of God's love.
- If you were each of the different characters in this story, what would you be thinking and feeling? How can you fill the characters in the story with life and energy as you explore the story with your children?
- If you were actually living at the time of the story what would you taste, smell, feel and hear? How could you bring these sensory experiences into your worship time?

- Are there any simple craft projects, household activities, or family activities that you could do together that would support the themes in this Bible story?
- For more ideas see *100 Quick and Easy Worship Ideas for Kids* (Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2004).

Growing closer as a family

- A useful tip for building effective worships is to make sure that everyone leaves the family worship experience knowing without a doubt that God loves them and that everyone in their family loves them.
- Use worship time to help you to get to know each other better, to share your hopes, to hear others pray for your fears and concerns, and to show care and appreciation for each other. The great thing about most interactive and multi-sensory worships is that different family members often have to help each other, create things together, and have fun together, and all those activities help families to stay closely connected with each other.

But we're so busy!

- Try to keep a couple of almost instant worship ideas ready prepared.
- When you have your own devotional, choose a thought that you want to carry with you throughout your day. As you think about it, wonder and pray about how you could share this thought creatively with your own children for their worship.
- Share worship times with other families. Meet up for Sabbath worships and take it in turns to plan a special worship activity for your group.
- Start a family worship idea file at church, and encourage families to add their ideas to the file, or put them on your local church website for families to download and use.
- Encourage your church to start a worship library, so that you can borrow good books, games, videos, etc. from the library to enhance your own family worships.
- Look at www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk – and click on 'Ideas' or go to www.lightlive.org

Foundation for great family worships

- As parents, make sure you are being filled spiritually through your own meaningful worship times.
- Keep the family worships simple. One idea is to use a devotional book suitable for the ages of your children, with short inspirational stories, during the week.
- Make Sabbath worship times as special as you can.
- Plan ahead for worships, and gather the materials you need well before time.
- Invest in the best spiritual material for your children! Buy good books from your local Christian Book Store, seek out and hire good Christian videos, buy interesting Bible games, and activity books.
- Keep worship times free of discipline and criticism. Make them positive experiences, which are fun, interesting, brief, happy and loving. This is what your children will remember the most.
- Use the worships to teach Bible stories, learn how to make good choices, follow God's guidance, develop a prayer relationship with God, learn about God's creation, memorize

scriptures, experience the joy of serving others in practical ways, learn worshipful songs, and enjoy being a Christian.

- Remember that children learn in different ways, and make sure that your worships contain practical illustrations, crafts, memorable stories and physical activities.
- Use the everyday events that happen to you and your children to teach them about God. News stories can jumpstart great discussions with teenagers. Opportunities for spiritual teaching are all around you once you start to look, and these are often the best ways to help your children learn about God.

Karen Holford loves to help families and children to grow their relationship with God. She has written books, resources, and training materials that teach parents how to nurture their children's spirituality, emotional well-being, and character.

Setting Priorities: Making Sabbath Special

Happy, Holy Sabbaths

I waited, guitar in hand, wondering if she'd even come to the door. Then, there she was. Her wrinkled face broke into a smile when she saw the children and recognized us from church. Soon she started singing the carols along with us. Tears welled in her eyes, and my own eyes misted up, too. Going Christmas caroling was supposed to be good "for the kids," but somehow I felt warm inside too.

When we do something for our kids and for God, He makes it good, and not just for the kids. As a ministry wife, traveling to different churches on Sabbaths with young children, I've had wonderful experiences passing out GLOW tracts and doing outreach. But sometimes it's not so easy, such as when my husband needs to make private visits and we're in a strange town. What then?

As I wonder how I'm going to entertain my school-aged daughters, the Spirit prompts me not to be negative. After all, am I not someone who likes the challenge of making lemonade out of lemons? Am I not thankful that we have a ministry family and that my husband is deeply dedicated? But how do we do it?

I recently asked other ministry spouses on Facebook what they do with their kids on Sabbath afternoons. Their ideas included visiting the sick with something special the kids have made (cards, pictures, flowers, small loaves of bread); holding a treasure hunt in which the kids use Bible verses to find clues; and creating a Sabbath craft box with everything needed to make cards or bookmarks to give away.

Shelli mentioned bird watching. Nicole, mother of three, suggested charades or reading together. Adel's son gets a "Sabbath treat." Amy's kids enjoy giving out Our Little Friend and Primary Treasure (with stickers inside) to other kids at parks and beaches. One wife says her older kids help take care of younger kids if there is a seminar at church on Sabbath. Another family has "Sabbath dolls" for their little girls, which only come out on Sabbaths.

Do children have to like every activity? LaRae, now a ministry wife herself, says, "We kids were required to go with Mom and Dad for pastoral visits or other outreach-oriented activities. Though I can't remember specifically how, I know Mom and Dad clearly taught us a life of helping and serving others was a natural outgrowth of a Christian life. I don't remember enjoying all those visits at the time, but now as an adult, the self-control to do what is best is strong. . . . Be honest with your kids and talk about the call on our lives to serve others."

Quite a few mentioned going outdoors for a walk or to a park. Nature can engage grownups, too. Parents are encouraged to "take their children outdoors to view God in nature. They can be pointed to the blooming flowers and the opening buds, the lofty trees and beautiful spires of grass, and taught that God made all these in six days and rested on the seventh day and hallowed it" (Child Guidance, p. 533). But instead of just taking a walk, why not do some of these activities along the way?

1. Listening game: Stand in a circle, holding both fists up. Silently close your eyes for 30 seconds. Listen for sounds and put up a finger each time you hear a sound. After the time is up, open your

eyes, count the sounds, and share what you heard. Another option: try counting the colors you can see from where you are.

2. Spiritual object lessons: Look in nature until each person finds something from which to draw an object lesson. take turns sharing. or blindfold someone and have them guess the nature object you found by feeling it.

3. Bible pictures: Build a Bible scene out of nature objects and then guess what the others built. Have people share why they like those stories.

4. Magnifying glass: Mark off a square outdoors (3 x 3 feet or one square meter) and give each child a magnifying glass. then let them find whatever they can. Learn the names of bugs, grasses, and flowers you find. You may also want to draw or take pictures of them and paste the pictures in a nature notebook.

5. Nature scavenger hunt: print seasonal sheets from the internet. Give each person a list of items to collect and a plastic bag. Have each child display their findings and share briefly.

6. Nature activity books: Take them along when you go into nature, do an activity together, and share the lesson from it. You'll learn a lot you didn't know about God.

Whatever activity you choose, take time to ask questions and talk about how each person's ideas relate to our spiritual lives. For example, if someone chooses a rock, encourage them to think of a Bible story, verse, or hymn that includes a rock, and then talk about how Jesus is our Rock. Perhaps sing the hymn or memorize the verse together. Ask questions such as, "When has Jesus been like a rock to you?" Of course, conversation should be adapted to appropriate age levels. Anything can be a springboard for deep spiritual conversation with our children. Let the Holy Spirit lead.

The Bible asks a question of importance to parents: "Where is the flock that was given to you, your beautiful sheep?" (Jer. 13:20, NKJV). Another quote has often motivated me to do something for or with my kids on Sabbaths: "Parents, above everything take care of your children upon the Sabbath. Do not suffer them to violate God's holy day by playing in the house or out-of-doors" (Child Guidance, p. 533). That's pretty straight talk!

We only have a few years with our children. Let's embrace each Sabbath afternoon, making sure we know where they are physically and spiritually during that time, and not become "weary while doing good" (Gal. 6:9, NKJV). Yes, it takes attention, planning, and sometimes even personal sacrifice of our own desires (like taking a nap!). But when we have our "flock" with us when Jesus comes, we'll have many happy memories. Even better, we'll know our sacrifices have been infinitely worth the effort.

Heather Krick, originally from South Africa, lives in California, USA, where she is wife to her husband in ministry and homeschool mom to their girls, Savannah and Heidi. Sabbath is her favorite day, and she is passionate about making it happy and holy for her children.

Setting Priorities: Your Marriage

Tightening the Knot

I'm sure you remember your wedding day, the day you "tied the knot." Some of us are newlyweds, others have been married a while, and still others are a lot farther down the path. Looking back over 21 years of marriage, I can see good times and bad times, and I know there will be more of both to come. I see how we've done things to build walls—like anyone, we're both prone to selfishness and self-protectiveness—but I also see that no matter how imperfect we are, God brought us together for His purpose. So, despite the times we loosen the "knot" God tied, we keep choosing to remain together. God desires us to endure in marriage, for better or worse. And in this, we gain an amazing picture of His deep love for us.

As a young bride, I couldn't imagine my life without Roger. Sometimes I pondered the "what if's." What if he was killed in a car accident? What if he got terminally ill? What if something else took him away from me? How would I go on? I didn't want to imagine life without him across the breakfast table every morning. Even now, years down the road, after plenty of ups and downs, my pervading thought is: I can't imagine life without a table between us.

How about you? Can you imagine life without the one God gave you? No matter what you've gone through together, would you have it any other way? Ann Voskamp writes, "Love is not passion. It is the pulse of sacrifice. Marital love is a demanding and dying thing compared to the stuff of movies and mirages. The love of imagination—it's entirely different than love made in the image of a Savior with nails in His hands. there are no standing lovers: the only way to love is to lay down. Lay down plans. Lay down agendas. Lay down self. Love is always the laying down."

I love the Bible's picture of how we are to love each other as Christ loves His bride, the church. But there are times when we allow our marital knot to loosen. I want to encourage you to do a few things to bless and bind you tighter together as God designed:

- Touch each other every day. Touch is important to our health, and it doesn't have to be dramatic.
- Be publicly positive about each other. Philippians 4:8 says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (NIV).
- Imagine yourself as a giant highlighter. Highlight the things that are honorable and true about your spouse. One wife shared that when she wrote down all the beautiful things she wanted to respect in her husband, she fell in love with him all over again.
- What you think about is what you will believe. Through dependence on God, we can control what we think. Put the negative out of your mind by setting your thoughts on the positive. Love is a behavior, not a feeling. But feelings will follow choice. focusing on the positive is a discipline. It doesn't come naturally, but it can be done. It's your choice.
- The small things are what matter. It's not the house, the car, the property, the money in the bank. These may create an environment conducive for happiness, but they cannot give happiness in themselves.
- Find time to be your spouse's friend. Do little things for each other that build intimacy. Because we are ministry leaders, the health of our marriages directly affects the impact of our leadership. Ministry leader Michael Hyatt writes:

“Being effective at work or in ministry begins by being effective at home. Early in our marriage, Gail and I attended a church led by a dynamic, thirty-something pastor. He was an extraordinary communicator. He was a wise and empathetic counselor. As a result, the church grew rapidly.

“But as we got better acquainted with him and his wife, we started noticing a disturbing trend in the way they related to one another. They would often make disparaging remarks about the other in public. At first, it seemed cute. Their comments seemed playful and humorous. Everyone laughed. But over time, they became more and more pointed, thinly masking their frustration with one another. We ultimately left that church. But several years later we learned they suffered an ugly divorce, both admitting to multiple affairs. They lost their family, and of course, their ministry. . . .

“Conversely, I noticed that Sam Moore, my predecessor at Thomas Nelson, always spoke highly of his wife. He would often say, ‘I hate to leave her in the morning, and I can’t wait to see her in the evening.’ They have been married now for nearly 60 years. Last time Gail and I were with them, they were holding hands. It was obvious they were still in love. In reflecting on these two experiences, I am convinced that praising your spouse in public is one of the most important investments you can make—in your family and in your leadership. This is important for at least five reasons:

*You get more of what you affirm. . . .

*Affirmation shifts your attitude toward your spouse. . . . if you start speaking well of someone, you start believing what you say.

*Affirmation helps strengthen your spouse’s best qualities. . . .

*Affirmation wards off the temptation of adultery. When others see you are happily married, they are less likely to proposition you. . . .

*Affirmation provides a model to those you lead. To be a truly effective leader, you must lead yourself, and then you must lead your family. Your marriage is a powerful visual of how you treat the people you value the most. When you speak highly of your spouse, your followers are more likely to trust you. It takes your leadership to another level.

“Affirming your spouse in public is an investment that pays big leadership dividends. In a world where fewer and fewer marriages last, it can be a difference-maker.” (“Why Speaking Well of Your Spouse is so Important,” © 2013, Michael S. Hyatt. All rights reserved. Originally published at www.michaelhyatt.com).

I hope you will take the time to invest in your marriage, in your spouse, in this gift God gave you. He knew what you needed when He brought you together, and what you needed all through your life. Tighten your knot by living the gospel toward one another and ultimately toward those who witness your life.

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Setting Priorities: Intimacy

Powerful Package

There's a lot of emphasis on keeping healthy these days. We are encouraged to sleep more, exercise more, and eat lots of lentils, quinoa, and organic spinach rich with Omega somethings!

This is all honorable, but what of our relational health? Are we keeping a close watch on the health of our primary relationships, including our marriages? We need to ensure that we are caring for all aspects of our intimate relationships. This includes our physical relations—our sexual intimacy. We need to make regular assessments in this part of marriage to be genuinely healthy.

Sex is God's doing! At Creation, after creating man and woman, He declared them "very good" (Genesis 1:31). If what He put together was that good, it's worth more than a casual glance. It would be rather arrogant of anybody, especially pastors, to question God's conclusions about His creative works! Our sexuality came from His heart and hands, and we would do well to respect and treasure His gift.

Our God-shaped sexuality finds its best expression inside a safe and secure monogamous relationship between husband and wife. That's Scriptural! It also receives an A grade when it's a mutual experience— one of shared reciprocity (1 Corinthians 7:5). It really reaches its zenith when it is an expression of love and respect, as Paul outlines in Ephesians 5:33.

Our sexual relationship is a journey—ideally a lifelong one. Sex is an aspect of our humanity that doesn't rest for prolonged periods of time, and it changes in its expression over the years and through various life experiences. It's dynamic— never static. This means we need to be sensitive to changes in our bodies, as well as shifts in our desires and needs for intimate love.

On call

One key issue for pastoral couples that can negatively impact their sexual relationship is the expectation that they will always be available to their flock—they are to be "on call" 24/7. When is a pastor not a pastor? Maybe between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.? Hardly! If there is a death or an emergency of some kind, the pastor will often be the first one to be involved, and deaths and emergencies don't all happen after 8 in the morning and before 10 at night.

Understandably, a committed pastor will want to invest heavily in the church and be regarded as a caring and compassionate shepherd. He will always consider it vital to "be there" for the members. He will gladly feed his flock with all his time and energy, as Jesus did for the 5,000. But unfortunately, his spouse will be found gathering the leftovers—the "crumbs" of his time and energy.

Spouses of over-invested pastors can readily consider the church as the "concubine" in the pastoral marriage. The pastor is seen to be so warm and caring, compassionate and gentle, a good listener and a wise counselor— to everybody else but his spouse. A work life shared at this level will often lead to a partner feeling angry, and her sense of being abandoned will play havoc on her desire for closeness and intimacy.

Recent research in the social sciences has pointed to the significance of emotional intimacy in marriage. In fact, in his research on marriages over many years, author and psychology professor John Gottman¹ found that the greater number of marriages ended not because they were in conflict all the time but because one or both spouses was lonely. Loneliness, Gottman concludes, leads to parallel marriages where there is little connection and closeness.

While the marriage may look to be in reasonable shape—the couple maintains all their usual ways of living and being a couple or family—inside they are lonely and hurting. It may only be a matter of time before the loneliness becomes too much for one or both partners and they drift away. Emotional intimacy speaks to the very heart of a marriage. While a couple may find their physical relationship enjoyable, it is the emotional connection that keeps their marriage alive and vibrant and leads to a long-term relationship. Pastoral couples who wish to build and maintain a vibrant sexual relationship over the lifetime of their marriage will need to learn the language of emotions and how to be emotionally available to each other. They also need to learn to respond sensitively to each other's emotional expressions and bids for attention and affection.

Dr. Sharon May², a prominent Christian counselor, suggests that it's trust that lies at the heart of any intimate marriage and is in fact the foundation for all other aspects of a healthy marriage. She suggests that intimacy, including sexual intimacy, will thrive only when there is mutual trust in the marriage—trust expressed in honesty, reliability, good judgment, and real heart trust. True intimacy will always be a reluctant partner in a marriage whenever there is a lack of trust.

Thank God

In the Song of Solomon the king says, “Get up, my dear friend, fair and beautiful lover—come to me! . . . Come, my shy and modest dove—leave your seclusion, come out in the open. Let me see your face, let me hear your voice. For your voice is soothing and your face is ravishing” (Song of Solomon 2:10-14, MSG). Any married pastor will do well to consider his spouse a ravishing lover!

Sure, there will be many times when she will feel anything but ravishing, and the first thing on her mind may not be love, but she is still the ultimate beauty who walked down the aisle to him. He will take seriously Paul's admonition to love his wife, even in those times when she is being especially unloving (Ephesians 5:25-30).

In marriage, sexuality is a gift. Its expressions come in all sorts of colors, shapes, and wrappings. A wise pastoral couple will unwrap this gift each day with joy and a deep sense of gratitude to God. They will make a commitment to treasure and protect this wonderful gift, remembering that it came from the hand of God.

¹ Gottman, John M. and Nan Silver. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999.

² Hart, Archibald D. and Sharon Hart Morris. *Safe Haven Marriage*. Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 2003

Dr. Trafford Fischer was director of the Adventist Institute of Family Relations and a member of the Discipleship Ministries Team (Family Specialty) for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.

On Moving

Tips for Pastors and Families Making a Move to a New Church and Community

Susan Miller knows how it feels to live a gypsy's life. As the wife of a corporate hotel executive, Miller moved 14 times in 25 years. The experience had a profound effect and led her to start Just Moved Ministry. The spiritually based non-profit reaches out to women who are frequently uprooted and equips them with tools to help them let go of the past and embrace new lives. She now leads relocation classes in churches, military installations and corporations, as well as trains motivators to guide families who are dealing with the stress of moving. Miller offers these suggestions.

1. Before you move, be sure you have closure with people and places. Take pictures to recall important memories. You might want to make a scrapbook or album with keepsakes representing your time in that church and community.
2. Once you have moved, be aware of what your overload factors are. Watch for physical, emotional and spiritual strain.
3. Try not to compare your last church and community with your new situation.
4. Be careful of having unrealistic expectations. They can be the ruin of any new appointment.
5. Remember, moving is a loss — a tangible loss. You will grieve on some level. Expect to go through the stages of grief because you have lost close touch with friends, a church, a home or a neighborhood you love. It can be even more traumatic when you move to a new place where you may not have a support system in place. Understand that what you are experiencing is normal.
6. Be sensitive to your spouse's identity crisis. The loss of personal identity in a move can be huge. So many times people introduce the spouse as a pastor's wife or husband rather than "this is Judy" or "this is Joe." Loneliness in ministry is a bigger issue than many people realize.
7. Let people help you. It could be the beginning of a friendship and it lets the congregation be a part of your family. Don't isolate yourselves.
8. Borrow an egg! The best way to begin a friendship is to borrow an egg. It's a way to start a conversation. It's a first step.
9. Build your nest. Circumstances may force you to hit the ground running, but as much as possible, find time to settle in. It is important to get unpacked, put things in place, begin to make a home and start putting down roots.
10. Communicate. Share your anxiety. Don't let your emotions fester. Talk to someone—preferably a spouse. Pray.
11. Remember, the greatest adventure is building the kingdom of God. You are doing God's work. God has you right where you are to be.

Justmoved.org offers Christ-centered books and materials related to moving, as well as a weekly Words of Encouragement email, a newsletter to encourage women in transition, a prayer support team, resources, devotionals, tips and encouragement for the mover. This article is used with permission from the author.

On Making Friends

Finding Friendship

One August day in 2010 our lives changed. My husband got a call to minister to two churches in Perth, Western Australia. This meant leaving the home we had enjoyed for the previous four years in New South Wales and moving almost 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) away.

I felt both excited and overwhelmed. But my greatest concern was for our three children— their ages then were 13, 9, and 2. *What a drastic change for them to wake up one day friendless*, I thought anxiously. I knew we would all have to start from scratch and form our circle of friends all over again. This would be our fourth move since we'd entered ministry, and yet it felt like the first time. I experienced all the emotions that come with leaving a familiar area and moving to a place foreign to us.

My husband seemed to have a better coping mechanism. When we arrived at our new location, he went straight to seeing people and carrying out his duties. I envied him, wishing I could have the same resilience to spring back so quickly.

Secretly, I resented the move. So did my oldest son. At the delicate age of 13, he was determined to let us know that he was not happy and that he did not want to be here. It pained me to see him so unhappy. I would cry often in prayer, letting God know how I felt.

Can you relate?

Many of us have gone through this experience. We have felt the pain and tears as we face new territories. We are territorial beings! We enjoy community. This is how God created each of us—to be social beings and to enjoy the company of other humans in friendship.

How interesting to realize that in the Garden of Eden, Adam was in constant face-to-face communion with his Creator, and yet he felt that something was missing! He yearned for another human who would understand him, because friendship is a God-given gift to the human race.

Throughout the inspired pages of the Bible we can see again and again how friendship has a transforming power on those who experience this amazing gift. Here is one wonderful example:

Abraham was God's friend!

- Isaiah 41:8: "But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend."¹
- James 2:23: "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God."
- 2 Chronicles 20:7: "Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?"

The Bible also gives us the key to having and making friends. Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” We must be friendly first!

Yet as we face new territories, we must be careful about whom we choose as friends. We’ve heard the proverb that says “by beholding we become changed.” Negative or ungodly companions corrupt good morals. We become more like those we associate with. During those fragile chapters in our lives in ministry when we start a new territory, the friends we make will produce good memories or destroy our effectiveness. Godly friends kindle godly behaviors.

Ellen White wrote: “It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence.”²

Survival 101

So, how did I make it through this new transition? First, I put a lot of effort into making sure our children were connected and well established in our new church. For several Sabbaths I observed a group of kids whom I could invite over. There was intentional effort and lots of prayers sent to God’s throne of grace. And by the end of the first year, they were established and content in their circle of friends and active in the church.

But what about us spouses? We can get so submerged in making others happy that we forget that we must look after our emotional selves if we want to effectively serve our spouses, kids, and churches.

One day about a year after our move, I realized an answer to my prayer. I was taking my youngest son to his swimming lesson. Every week I had seen a woman sitting all by herself, waiting for the lesson to finish before making a quick exit. She seemed to be absorbed on her phone during every lesson—a clear indication that she was not interested in starting a conversation with any nearby parents. Week after week I saw her there, alone and seemingly friendless.

Finally I found the courage to approach her, given that her daughter and my son were both taking swimming lessons and getting along quite well. I took this as an opportunity to start a casual conversation. Now, more than five years later, she has become my most trusted and loyal friend. We’ve shared many meals and outings together, and she has started coming back to church with her family. We have Bible studies once a week, during which we chat and share about life.

I’ve learned an important principle: We don’t need to have a crowd of friends to experience fulfillment. And to make friends, we must be friendly first!

“Things will go wrong with every one; sadness and discouragement press every soul; then a personal presence, a friend who will comfort and impart strength, will turn back the darts of the enemy that are aimed to destroy. Christian friends are not half as plentiful as they should be. In hours of temptation, in a crisis, what a value is a true friend! Satan at such times sends along his agents to cause the trembling limbs to stumble; but the true friends who will counsel, who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul,— oh, such help is worth more than precious pearls.”³

Friends are essential in our lives, and the older a person gets the more valuable friendships become. There is something special about having a friend with whom we can open our hearts, unburden our troubles, and share our joys of life. It's not just about ministering *to* them, but being ministered to *by* them.

As we move about, obeying God's calling, friendships are one of the most important assets in a ministerial couple's life. God will present to you the friends that will complement your life. Just make sure you ask Him. Proverbs 27:9 says, "Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice" (NIV).

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Bible texts are from the New King James Version.

² Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 555.

³ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1163

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On Finances

Money, Money, Money . . .

Molly stared at the credit card statement in her hands. How come they were more than \$10,000 in debt? Why hadn't Bill spoken about it before? And how could they ever pay it all back?

Hannah hid the blouse under the groceries when she carried them into the house. She didn't know how to tell James that she'd bought something new.

One of the most challenging topics for couples to talk about is money. It can open up so many painful emotions that it's easier to stuff them all in a garbage can and sit on the lid. Money is not just about paper and coins; it comes all tangled up with concepts of ownership, power, identity, and entitlement.

The meaning of money

What does money mean to you? Here are some tips to keep in mind as you answer that question.

- Instead of thinking about money as “my money” or “our money,” think about it as “God’s money entrusted to us.”
- Try pausing before you purchase and ask yourself, “Why am I buying this? Is it what I really need—or am I trying to fill an empty space in my heart?” Sometimes we buy things because we think they will make us feel better. It could be anything from a doughnut to a designer handbag. But maybe what you really need is a hug, some special time with your spouse, or some appreciation, comfort, encouragement, understanding, or support.
- Pray about your use of money. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you can make changes and grow.

Financial planning

Every marriage needs a balance of wise saving, wise spending, and wise sharing or giving. All of this complexity needs careful planning. Here are some strategies for achieving that.

- Talk about your finances together. Make it feel safer by telling each other three things you appreciate about your spouse’s use of money, at least one thing you would like to do better in relation to money, and one financial goal you’d like to work toward together. Avoid blaming each other, because that will push you further apart and make it harder to talk honestly and openly.
- If you have any debts, work out a manageable plan to reduce them. Aim to owe less at the end of each month rather than more.
- Set short, medium, and long-term financial goals together. Determine how much you want to save each month and how you plan to save for a long-term project, such as buying a home.
- Give each other an allowance that can be used freely without question. Agree what can be spent on household purchases with, and without, the other person’s consent.
- If talking about money becomes emotional or difficult, take a break and consider why you feel sad, ashamed, embarrassed, angry, guilty, afraid, etc. When do your financial choices make you feel truly happy, hopeful, peaceful, loved, and loving? What are the relational needs that you need your partner to meet in order to help you feel loved and safe again, such as respect, forgiveness, understanding, time with each other, physical closeness, acceptance, comfort, and encouragement?

Questions to discuss

You and your spouse will come to a greater understanding of each other (and yourselves) as you talk over these questions.

- How did my family talk about money and use their money?
- What wisdom did I learn from my family about saving money?
- What wisdom did I learn from my family about spending money?
- What have I learned from my own mistakes and successes about saving, spending, and using money?
- When it comes to finances, what are my strengths, and what are my challenges?
- When it comes to talking about money, I often feel (sad, angry, afraid, frustrated, etc.), and it would really help me if you could . . .
- Three things I appreciate about how you help to manage the family budget are . . .
- One thing I would like to do differently to help our finances is . . .

Don't be afraid to go for financial counseling if your money is in a muddle. The sooner you start to address the problems, the easier it will be to solve them.

Financial values

It's important to establish a value system in your approach to money. Here are some ways to do that.

- Make a list of five to six values relating to your finances, and list them in order of priority. Encourage your spouse to do the same. Then share your lists, explaining what your values mean to you, where they've come from, and why you placed them in that order. Next develop a shared financial value list, discussing how you want to blend and prioritize your values as a couple. Use this value list to help you evaluate your spending and financial planning.
- Study biblical values connected to finances. Consider the ones below:
 - Prayer: Asking God to help you use His money wisely, and asking Him to heal the hurts and struggles connected with your use of money (Philippians 4:6, 7).
 - Faith: Believing that God will provide the things you need (Philippians 4:19).
 - Trust: Trusting Him with your tithe (Malachi 3:10).
 - Gratitude: Thanking God for your money, recognizing that every penny comes from His generous provision to you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
 - Stewardship: Providing wisely for the current and future needs of your family (Luke 16:10-12).
 - Generosity: Giving generously to those who are in need or to bring joy to others (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).
 - Honesty: Being open and transparent with each other about your financial challenges and spending (Matthew 5:37, Proverbs 19:1).
 - Hospitality: Sharing the gifts of your food and home with others so that they can experience God's love and your care for them (Romans 12:13).
 - Forgiveness: Forgiving yourself, and others, for past financial mistakes (Colossians 3:13).
 - Patience: Being patient with each other when financial mistakes are made (1 Corinthians 13:4).
 - Economy and resourcefulness: Using your resources wisely, including reusing and mending things rather than discarding and wasting them (John 6:12).
 - Saving: Being willing to save and invest money wisely rather than spend it immediately (Proverbs 13:11, Matthew 25:27).

- Hard work: Doing your best at whatever you do, as though you're working for God (Colossians 3:23, 24).
- Sharing and lending: Helping others to save money by lending them the things they need and letting those things go (generously) if you don't get them back (Luke 6:35, 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

This article, authored by Karen Holford, first appeared in The Journal, 2nd Quarter 2016. Karen, with her pastor husband Bernie, lives in the United Kingdom where she is Family Ministries director for the Trans-European Division.

On Hospitality

True Hospitality Made Practical

We live in a world influenced by social media. Picture perfect table settings and staged homes are nearly all I see when I scroll through Pinterest, Instagram and Facebook. Neat napkin holders and place cards are strategically set by the beautiful food that must have taken hours to prepare and to plate so meticulously. I haven't even touched on the theme parties, showers and wedding receptions shown that could come right out of a Hollywood movie!

When I talk to others about it, they all seem to express the same underlying tone: such things are not attainable, so why even try? I remember taking one of those spiritual gifts tests when I was a teenager and scoring high in the "hospitality" category. While I am not sure how I feel about such tests, it sparked an interest in me all those years ago.

What is hospitality, and why is it so important? Does it have anything to do with those picture-perfect tablescapes? Is everyone called to show hospitality, or is it just me?

The Bible has a few things to say about hospitality

I looked just a few up (all verses are from the ESV).

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2

"...and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts" Acts 2:46

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me" Matthew 25:35

"Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." 1 Peter 4:9

"Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." Romans 12:13

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34,35

"She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy." Proverbs 31:20

With the Bible being so clear on the importance of each of us showing hospitality, I felt it important to not only practice but help others do so as well. First, I want to share with you some hospitality myths, and then we'll talk about some practical ways to show hospitality.

Myth 1: You Have to Have a Perfect Home to be Hospitable

More important than an open home is an open heart and open hands. Your home does not have to look magazine-worthy but should be filled with genuine love.

Hospitality is not limited to our homes. We should constantly be aware of those around us, and meeting the needs that can be met.

Myth 2: Hospitality is to be Extended to Friends and Family

Hospitality is for everyone.

Myth 3: Hospitality Requires Great Amounts of Time, Meticulous Planning and the Best Version of Myself

Hospitality requires vulnerability and obedience. Some of the best and most memorable visits are messy and unexpected. Sometimes showing hospitality is even unwanted! Although the practice of hospitality asks the sacrifice of our time, our needs and our resources, it is rewarded with great joy. There is not much that is more energizing and fulfilling than serving others. You just need to be willing!

Myth 4: Hospitality is Synonymous with Entertaining

There is no mention of Pinterest or picture-perfect table spreads in any definitions of hospitality. Of course, there is nothing wrong with making things beautiful for our guests, but is it true hospitality? Remember: entertaining is to impress, but hospitality is to bless.

Myth 5: Hospitality is a Spiritual Gift

Hospitality can be risky, and is asked of all of us (remember those verses above?). While some of us may find it easier to do than others, we are all called to show Christ's love and hospitality - gift or not, it can be (and should be!) a part of our lives.

Myth 6: Hospitality is Merely About Sharing a Meal or a Bed

Strive to do more than just offer a meal or a bed. When we are hospitable, we reach others in a personal and intimate way. Be intentional about who you reach out to; being aware of those around you and their needs plays a huge role in this. Think of the lonely. Think of the unloved. Think of those who need serving. Be bold and think of those you can help draw closer to Jesus. Think about how your hospitality can affect the world! Hospitality is for us to show God's love to others. God calls us to it, and the rewards are eternal. We have been blessed so we can bless others. Withholding hospitality will hinder our joy.

As promised, here are some practical ways to be hospitable even if your guests are extremely last-minute.

Create a warm atmosphere

While fresh flowers and candles do go a long way to creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere, nothing is as refreshing as a warm, loving smile and willingness to serve. That being said, light some candles and cut some fresh flowers for your guests to enjoy as well! It's simple and makes a great impact. Welcome everyone into your home. Let them feel loved, not only by you, but also by God.

Be aware of needs

Be aware of those around you. Remember that hospitality is not limited to inside your home. Pay attention as you interact with others, and do not let anyone go unnoticed. Take time out of your day to encourage someone, to pray with someone, and to show kindness.

In your home, make sure your guests have what they need, and feel comfortable enough to ask for it. For overnight guests especially, I suggest making everything as accessible as possible. They should feel that they are at home. Make warm drinks and water easily available and stock the bathroom and guestroom with essentials like towels of every size, toiletries and extra toilet paper.

Serve meals with love

Meals do not have to be extravagant or use expensive ingredients. Make simple meals with love, and do not feel pressured to make something new or complicated (there's always the danger that something new will flop anyway!). Your guests are not there to judge your cooking. They are there to be blessed by you (whether they know it or not). Don't let them leave just thinking about the spectacular meal you just served them, let them leave rejoicing that you have served their souls.

Build a relationship with those around your table and talk about the things that truly matter. Our motto should be like John's: Less of me, more of Jesus. And remember: entertaining is to impress, but hospitality is to bless!

Amanda Walter is a ministry wife and teacher. She and her husband, Jonathan, currently live in the US state of Maryland. This is a compilation of two articles from her blog www.MapleAlps.com.

On Conflict Management

When They Criticize

Shortly after becoming a pastor's wife, I found myself in a church meeting where my husband was the object of criticism. He sat there quietly, offering absolutely no defense. "Why doesn't he say something?" I wondered desperately.

After a few more arrows aimed in his direction, I said to myself, "Well, if he isn't going to defend himself, I guess that is what a good Christian wife is for. I rose to my feet, made an impassioned, one-minute speech, burst into tears, and rushed from the audience! Since that traumatic event I have done a bit better handling criticism. (That wouldn't be hard, I can hear you say.)

It's difficult when people criticize you, but it's worse when they get after your husband. Sometimes, church members don't want to confront the pastor, but feel they can pass on their complaints via the pastor's wife because she isn't so intimidating.

Criticism takes many forms. "He's too deep," says one. "He's too shallow," says the next. "He's too dull. My kids are bored," confides another. Do they expect you to say, "Oh, I agree, Mrs. Smith. He bores me to pieces, too?"

Sometimes when I'm listening to someone criticizing my husband, I think to myself, "Has this person forgotten I'm married to the man? How would she feel if I drew her aside by the coat racks to tell her I felt her husband really should smarten up his appearance?"

How do we handle such encounters? Perhaps we leap to our beloved's defense or cut the person off mid-complaint. I usually feel quite sick or produce a migraine headache within half an hour of such an episode. After 30 years I still wrestle with the unfairness of it all.

Now, of course, if we find some truth in the criticism (and there is often some truth), we need to be mature enough to own that part of it and be teachable, pliable, and changeable.

Here are some of the ways I have learned to cope with criticism:

1. Hold your breath and count to 20 before saying anything at all.
2. Try to listen long enough to let complainers know they are being heard, and you have understood the problem.
3. As you listen, ask yourself why this person is so upset. Are they under pressure themselves, from other quarters, and did my husband happen along at the wrong moment? Often, this is the case.
4. Let the first thing you say be a quiet and gentle word, "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1 NKJV). "Thank you for being so concerned" is one possibility.
5. Try to be objective and impartial. Pretend your husband belongs to someone else—almost impossible, but try anyway.
6. Don't start to reply with a defensive statement. Find a place to agree without being disloyal. For example, you could say, "I understand your children being bored in church, Mrs. Smith. Most children are at that age."

7. Quietly refute any criticism that is unfair or untrue with such statements as, “I’m not sure you’ve been given the whole story,” or “If you know all the circumstances, I think you’d judge the matter differently.” Pray for the person—while you are talking together and afterward.
8. If you feel the criticism is justified, talk to your husband about it. If not, don’t mention it. He has enough on his plate without piling it up with sour grapes.
9. Try to send complainers on their way with no new criticism of the pastor’s spouse.

Paul experienced a lot of criticism in his life and ministry. He was able to say, “It is a very small thing that I am judged of you” (1 Corinthians 4:3 NKJV). I’d like to be able to say that, too, when either of us is criticized. It will only be a small thing to me if I believe as Paul did, that Jesus is the judge and not this particular church member.

Knowing the motives of our hearts, God will evaluate all of our ministry as well as our actions and reactions according to His love, knowledge, and understanding. All of us benefit by committing it to Him and leaving it in His hands.

Jill Briscoe is a speaker, writer, and ministry wife. This article appeared in Sunday to Sunday, Fall 1989. Via Shepherdess International Resource Bulletin, July 1990.

Through God’s eyes

My husband pastored a very challenging church for several years. Many of the members were critical, harsh, and judgmental. I felt as if I could never do anything right. They even complained because I rocked my 1-year-old daughter to sleep during the church services, instead of encouraging her to listen! I grew up in a church that was incredibly supportive, accepting and loving, so their critical attitudes left me frustrated and discouraged. One day God helped me to look at these challenging people through His eyes. I saw them as people who were lonely, hurting and frightened. I saw them as people who had never really experienced God’s love or the generous love of other people. They were still difficult to live with, but my heart softened towards them, and I tried to find different ways to love them. My attempts to care for them didn't always make a difference to the challenging people, but it made a difference to me. Now, whenever someone is behaving in a way that I find hurtful or difficult, I try to look at them through Jesus’ eyes, and to see what He sees when he looks at them. What He sees is a unique and wonderful person that He created and died for, someone who is hurting, and someone who is desperately hungry for God’s love, compassion, comfort, peace and forgiveness.

~ A pastor’s wife

Section III

The Hard Times



Dealing with Grief

Helping a Hurting Friend

One fall day our ranch was buzzing with activity. Family and friends had gathered to enjoy the beautiful weather. Returning from the grocery store with my niece, we saw one of the couples at the turnoff. Waving for us to stop, they told us my husband had been hurt. The ambulance was on the way, and they would show them the way. We hurried to the house, and prayed as we drove.

When we got to the barn, my husband was lying on the ground. I knelt beside him, and he said, "Honey, I can't move my arms or legs." I knew he was paralyzed. I was in shock and near tears. They told me he had been pitching hay out of the barn and slipped on the slick hay. In trying to catch himself, he leaned against the barn wall, but the hinged opening was un-fastened and he fell through it to the ground below. The eight feet would have knocked the breath out of him, but his head hit a foundation stone and that broke his neck. He died two weeks later.

Until the death of my husband, I had lived without tragedy. Many times I held myself at arm's length when friends were hurting. I would send cards or flowers and assure myself that someone closer to them was comforting them. I asked them to call if they needed me. No one ever called to say they needed me.

Maybe you feel the same way. Here are some suggestions I wish I had been given long ago when heartbreak was a stranger to me:

Visiting is not intruding

My heart went out to friends who were hurting. Because I didn't know what to say, I called or made a "duty" visit and then kept away. They needed someone who understood, I thought, and could comfort them better than I could. I didn't know that just being there was a comfort.

A few years ago my next door neighbor was dying of cancer. I have learned that he would have welcomed a "sit down visit" where we could discuss what was going on in the outside world, his life, and the lives of our families. My friend must have felt alone and forgotten.

I could have helped prepare his children for his death by sharing this Bible verse: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion, and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4, NIV)* Unbelievers also need to hear that God loves them and is grieving with them.

Offer practical help

Your suffering friend may be too dysfunctional to know what he or she needs. After my husband's accident, two of my pastors and several of my dearest friends arrived at the hospital intensive care unit. I was so glad to see them. I don't know who called them. We waited together. I called the children, and then a friend took over the phone and called my family and friends. We formed a circle and prayed. One of my friends heard a nurse say, "What a loving family they are!" This can be true in a Christian body.

Many friends brought food. One organized meals and put a book by the phone to record the messages and names of visitors. Another brought a throw rug to put by the door to protect my carpet. After the funeral, one woman took all the envelopes for thank-you notes. She addressed and stamped them for me so I had more time to write the notes. God showed me His love through the kind acts of my friends.

Use words sparingly

When my father died, we went to mother as soon as possible. She was glad to see us but was yearning to talk with a neighbor whose husband had died a few months earlier. It was a shock to know she was seeking the comfort of a friend over the family, but I came to realize she needed all of us in a different way.

When my daughter-in-law miscarried, I did not understand her pain. Later she told me how much she suffered. She grieved as one would over the death of any child. One person said, "I'm sorry, but you are young and can have other children." This hurt. There will never be another just like the one she lost.

A dear widow understood how I would feel in my empty house. She offered to come spend the night with me for two months. We enjoyed each other, and it filled that void. She also helped me with my tax forms, which I had never done before. God used her in a mighty way.

Let friends cry on your shoulder

We can't see the "silver lining" when grief overwhelms us. Minimizing the grief makes one feel inadequate. It hurts. We need a friend to listen and empathize with us as we grieve. Perhaps a crisis is not a time to evangelize, but we can share how God has comforted us.

When I was told my husband had died, I started crying. My family put their arms around me, and we cried together. Then we praised God that he was no longer suffering. What a comfort it was to me when a dear friend searched the Scriptures for the promise God gives to the widows. My favorite one is, "Do not be afraid; ... for your Maker is your husband- the Lord Almighty is his name" (Isa. 54:4-5, NIV). What a joy to know that He will give me wisdom and guidance and provide for me like a husband.

Write a letter of condolence

Printed cards are better than nothing, but they do not take the place of a note from the heart. I received many cards. Months later I took the time to go through them again. I read each message and personal note. They were a double comfort to me. The most meaningful letters were those describing our happy times together or memories we shared. I picked out the ones from people my children knew and kept them to share the next time we were together.

Be realistic in your expectations

One of my friends had been nursing her husband for six years before he died. She was exhausted. Soon after the funeral his business collapsed through circumstances beyond her control. She was faced with almost insurmountable stress because of the business and some misunderstanding among her grown children. Some mornings she could hardly get out of bed.

One friend kept trying to get her to go places and do things that were beyond her strength. The friend got mad and fussed at her, causing more pain. It's good to offer invitations, but pushing can hurt a friendship. "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18, NIV).

Continue to see your friend socially

When you are physically and emotionally healed, friends can help. It is lonely to be left out because you are no longer a "couple." Fellowship is particularly important to those suffering from the breaking up of a marriage. One of my friends and I took walks together, giving her an opportunity to unload the hurt and confusion.

Going alone to evening functions was difficult for me. It was also stressful to plan social activities. Often I would yearn to just stay at home and "hibernate." I was fortunate to have some close friends who would ask me to go with them to parties. When I entertain, I try to include singles as well as couples. We need one another.

Recovery takes time

What a comfort it was when one friend, seeing the stress and confusion I was going through, would say to me: "Don't try to push yourself. It takes time. One of these days things will be back to normal, but what you are going through now is OK." She said it to me enough times that I believed her and began to relax.

Unfortunately, the government doesn't give a widow time to grieve. There are so many forms to be filled out. The hospital, doctors, and funeral home all have to be paid. I really learned the meaning of Psalm 55:22: "Cast your cares on the *Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall*" (NIV).

Love and listen to your friend

Your caring presence and your willingness to listen are the two most precious gifts you can offer a hurting friend. After my neighbor's husband died, I realized how lonely she was. We got together to chat. She talked and I listened.

One friend "washed my feet" by inviting me to dinner and renting a movie I had been wanting to see. After the movie, we sat and shared. I went home with a feeling of being loved. The people I found most helpful were those who would make no attempt to distract me from my grief but would encourage me to talk about it. This seemed to make it less frightening each time we went over it. One of my neighbor's daughters refused to accept her father's death or talk about it, and I know there must still be a big lump in her heart that will not melt.

Working your way through a crisis or grief is a long, slow process. There are no shortcuts. However, caring friends can make the path smoother and the curves less frightening. You can be that friend to another.

This article by Frances Bradley first appeared in Home Life, November 1992, (c) Copyright 1992, The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Pastors and Pornography

Escaping the Tornado: Overcoming Pornography Addiction

While living in Texas, I developed a deep respect for, and quite frankly a fear of, tornados. There is something terrifying about a storm that comes up so quickly, lashes out so violently, and is so thoroughly destructive—mangling homes and trees, leaving nothing but debris in its path. In 2001 a different kind of tornado hit my world. It came rolling in, the sky turned dark, things began to twist, and thankfully God was there by my side holding me. The storm that rocked my world was pornography.

The revelation was an accident. I stumbled upon a website that my husband, Bernie, had forgotten to erase from the computer history. Shocked and sickened, hoping and praying that it was a mistake, I confronted him a few days later with what I had found. I was stunned when he revealed that he had been struggling with pornography for a long time, even before we had met. My world was spinning. The marriage I thought I had, the man that I thought I knew, the life that I thought we had created together, no longer existed in the same way for me.

At that point, I had no idea of the ways in which pornography entangles itself in one's mind. I assumed that after we talked, cried, and prayed together that it would be over and that would be the end of it. Boy, was I wrong! The two stormy years that followed made the initial revelation of my husband's addiction seem like a gentle spring rain shower. Two years of on-again, off-again struggles. Two years of Bernie trying to break free from the grip of pornography on his heart and mind. For every step forward, it seemed that we took two or three steps back, with Bernie going for weeks without pornography and then falling right back into it.

While he was battling to stay pure in his heart, my world was out of control. I was anxious over every minute he spent on the computer, and I checked the website history filled with worry and doubt. Instead of a home filled with love, ours had become a home of fear and sadness.

I wish I could say that I reached out to someone or shared our struggles with even another pastor's wife, but I remained silent. What would people say? How would people react? After all, my husband is a pastor. The fear that held me back and kept me silent did far more harm than good. It served as my personal shame factor; each time I thought about reaching out to someone, fear of judgment would rush right in.

In retrospect, both Bernie and I see that pornography has strength in the dark. Anonymity makes it stronger, but sharing the struggle with other Christ-followers helps to break its crushing stronghold.

Finally I'd had enough. Away at camp meeting with my parents and our daughters, I decided that I was going to ask Bernie to leave. As heart-wrenching as that decision was, I knew that living this way was not what God had intended. Instead of being a godly wife and mother, I had become obsessed with being my husband's porn police. Things simply had to change.

I returned to our home in Texas ready to ask Bernie to leave, but in my absence, something had changed. While I was away, God had been working on Bernie's heart. He had finally made the

decision to ask for help from a friend. That action changed things. God had been waiting for Bernie to be open and vulnerable to others, and finally he was willing. Light was breaking through in our marriage and our home. I chose to stay, praying that God would keep moving in our lives.

In October 2003 Bernie attended a Christian conference about sexual purity called Every Man's Battle. There he learned principles and tools to help him gain victory. It was like a rebirth in many ways, for both Bernie and our marriage.

Women often ask me how we got back to the healthy, happy place where we are now. The answer? Simply God's love and grace. I am always amazed by it and overwhelmed by it, but most of all I am a recipient of it. God's love and grace changed my husband; it freed him from an evil that had enslaved his heart for years. I watched with amazement as the man I'd been married to for nine years became a different person, a better person.

I cannot say it was an easy process; it took years to undo the havoc that Bernie's addiction had wreaked on my self-esteem and trust. Thankfully, God allowed us to be in a location where healing could occur, and He placed people in my life whom I could lean on.

This year my husband celebrates 10 years of being pornography-free. His life is forever changed, our lives are forever changed, and God has cleared away the debris. Pornography is the enemy of intimacy. Satan uses it to destroy lives, especially the lives of pastors.

A 2011 poll by a major Christian magazine indicates that about 40 percent of pastors struggle with porn. That is a staggering number! We cannot be silent on this issue. We must battle for our families, for our marriages, for our homes. God is waiting for us to allow Him to help us survive the storm. If you (or someone you love) is caught in the tornado of sexual sin, please seek help—because there is hope.

Christina Anderson works as a Child Life Specialist in a pediatric hospital. She and Bernie have three daughters—Madison, Brooklyn, and Liberty—and a dog named Lucy. In their spare time they enjoy traveling and watching football. Currently they live in Apopka, Florida.

Resources for pornography

We understand that sexual addiction can be a very private struggle. We offer these resources as a starting point for help and healing, whether for someone in your own family or for you to share with others in your sphere of influence who would benefit.

Books

Every Man's Battle, by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker with Mike Yorkey

Breaking the Silence, by Bernie Anderson

At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry, by Steve Gallagher

©Focus on the Family also has many book recommendations for pastors dealing with recovery from sexual sin.

Websites

Exceed Ministry (Excellence in Christ Thru Evangelism to the Erotically Defiled)

<http://exceedinglory.org>

Fight the New Drug

<http://www.fightthenewdrug.com>

Fight the New Drug is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating individuals about the harmful effects of pornography.

Gateway to Wholeness

<http://gatewaytowholeness.com>

Gateway to Wholeness is a program developed to help people overcome problems associated with pornography use.

New Freedom to Love

<https://www.newfreedomtolove.org>

New Freedom to Love is created by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America with the specific goal of raising awareness of the pornography epidemic and giving churches a tool to help members and their families.

Pure Life Ministries (a Christian resource that is not Adventist)

<http://www.purelifeministries.org>

Setting Captives Free

www.settingcaptivesfree.com

Audio Presentations

Audioverse.org offers many messages on sexuality and the fight for purity in our current culture.

We recommend the following sermons by Nicole Parker, a biblical counselor. You can also find more audio presentations on her personal website: <https://heartthirst.org/resources>.

“The Broken image” (a 2-part audio presentation)

<https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/recordings/3873/the-broken-image-part-1.html>

“Call It Anything But Love” (a 2-part audio presentation)

<https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/recordings/3875/call-it-anything-but-love-part-1.html>

Internet Filters

Make sure that your content filters are up-to-date and you have accountability software installed on your computer. You can adjust your security settings on your computer, but it also helps to have an outside source monitoring and providing accountability.

Cnet.com has a large selection of internet security software such as McAfee, Norton, Webroot, or Kasperskey from which to choose. CovenantEyes.com is a good option for accountability software, too.

If you'd like more information to share with someone in need, email ministryspouses@gmail.com. We can recommend outstanding confidential counselors in North America and in some other parts of the world as well.

Loneliness

The “Pastor’s Wife”

Loneliness is a very real feeling we all have experienced at some time in our lives. It can be easy to feel isolated and alone as a pastor’s spouse, especially if you feel the congregation compares you to the previous pastor’s spouse. It can be very disheartening if your husband’s flock thinks of you only as “the pastor’s spouse,” someone outside of their circle, someone not part of the congregation.

I have experienced such situations. At the age of 42, I married my husband; I was not prepared to take on the role of the “pastor’s wife.” There were no classes I could attend on how to become a “pastor’s wife.” I had no mentor. No one explained to me I would be living in a fishbowl.

I soon realized I could no longer be just a member of my new church home, for I was now “the pastor’s wife.” My new husband informed me he did not want me to hold church offices. He said it would weaken the church because when it came time to transfer to another district, the church would have to fill my offices. He said I would have to do as “the pastor’s wife.”

I resisted his request for I had always held church offices. I enjoy working in the church. So I held many church offices, and I did leave the church looking for members to fill my offices. I was also tired from all my church work, substitute teaching, caring for three of our five children still at home, housework, yard work, being “the pastor’s wife.” Yet, though I stayed busy and tired, I remained lonely.

I wanted to be just a regular member, but the congregation wanted me to be “the pastor’s wife.” I felt displaced. I wanted to belong, to attend church and be one of “them” as I had been in my former church. I longed for a few close friends. My life as a “pastor’s wife” certainly differed from my old life.

Gradually I began to realize that my life would never be the same. How was I to deal with this new situation? I felt so inadequate. I was friendly on the outside, but inside I felt so alone. I tried to guess what my husband’s congregation wanted from me. I did not know. I finally decided God wanted me to be myself, not a composite of other pastors’ wives I had known, but my unique self.

Of course every church congregation is different. But I have learned that every congregation needs the pastor’s wife to be “the pastor’s wife,” not a “regular member.” I have also discovered that titles are only titles because I am still the person I was before I married my husband. I have needs, talents, hopes, and dreams. And the members of our church are as I am. They too are needy, talented, hopeful, and dreamers. I have the privilege to reach out to them, touch their lives, and love them.

Gradually I came to realize that I really do hold an office—the office of “pastor’s wife.” It is the only office I can fill that will not leave the church weakened when I have to say goodbye, for another will automatically take my place. Hopefully she will not be compared to me for good or bad but be accepted for who she is.

I am no longer lonely. The loneliness disappeared without notice. I think it was when I stopped thinking about myself and started concentrating on how to show the members of my churches I accept them just as they are.

I began to make phone calls just to say hello; phone calls to check on my brothers and sisters who are sick, hurting, or lonely; phone calls of encouragement, sympathy, sharing, and prayer.

Another member and I sent birthday cards to every man, woman, and child in our church family, no matter if they attended church or not. We sent anniversary cards to all the husbands and wives, get-well cards, sympathy cards, and wedding cards. We sent cards to our shut-ins and our boarding students once a month. Not one person on our church books was forgotten. All through the year I made calls to our members to keep our membership directory updated. I even included the ones who lived out of our area. I wanted them to know they were on my mind. This directly led to transfers, renewed church attendance, and better communication.

Visitation is so important. Visits to shut-ins and people in the hospital and nursing homes bring untold pleasure. A simple "I love you and am thinking about you" will brighten many people's lives.

Several years ago I began giving a hug to each woman after church, perhaps so I could receive the hugs I needed. There are many lonely women in your churches; I know there are in mine. They have told me how much our hugs mean to them. Share their joys and hopes and dreams. Share their tears and hurt and pain. Share their disappointment and frustrations. Share God's answers to your prayers. Share meals together. Study the Bible together. Pray together. Be ready for any emergency. Be ready to have fun. Be ready to do what you can.

No one could have prepared me for this office. I would have been ready to say, "I am not cut out to be a pastor's wife/husband." Maybe you have said that yourself. Perhaps you feel overwhelmed by the ministry, discouraged, and frustrated by your husbands' or wives work schedule, inadequate to fill everyone's expectations.

We are not above such human feelings. Jesus knows what life on this earth is like. Talk to Him. Pour out your heart to Him. Ask Him to meet your needs. Be yourself. Use the talents you have, the gifts God has given you. No one can expect more. And most of all be friendly, honestly friendly. People know the difference between put-on friendliness and genuine interest.

We are not made from a cookie cutter. We are different because God wants us that way. He has a plan and a work for each one of us. You will have your own unique ministry, and when you do, you will not feel lonely. You will experience contentment.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:3-5, KJV). Hold these promises close.

By putting others first, we lose sight of ourselves, and loneliness is gone, replaced by contentment and peace. Every person, young and old in your congregation is special. Look for the inner beauty in each one. Many are buds just needing a little sunshine to bloom.

The ministry is not all roses. There are problems. Satan would have us concentrate on the thorns and forget the roses. I urge you to treat everyone with the same respect and interest and make

friends of all. Some people are harder to love, but the Holy Spirit will give you the grace and patience you will need.

Don't be afraid to love with all your heart. Sure it hurts when you have to say goodbye and move to another district, but you can't truly love without being vulnerable. Being "the pastor's wife" is a growing experience for me—a definite opportunity for character growth and blessings without end.

Lois Reynolds was a pastor's wife for 14 1/2 years. She played both piano and organ and was actively involved in the life of the church. She passed away Dec. 16, 2000.

Resources for fighting depression and loneliness

This is by no means an exhaustive list of resources, but a few to get you started on your way to peace and emotional health.

Books

All of these titles are available from the Adventist Book Center online. You may also look for them on Amazon.com.

The Power of Hope by Julian Melgosa and Michelson Borges

Depression—the Way Out by Dr. Neil Nedley

The Heart Mender by Sally Streib

Sometimes I Don't Feel Like Praying by Mike Jones

Online Support

AdventistOnline.com has a plethora of support groups to join, with topics ranging from mental health to prayer.

AdventistRecoveryGlobal.org is a sub-ministry of the General Conference Health Ministries department.

Programs/Counseling

Nedley Depression Recovery
www.nedleydepressionrecovery.com

ABIDE Counseling, Jennifer Jill Schwirzer
www.abidecounseling.us

Depression

Beneath the Shadows

Even men and women of God feel sad and overwhelmed at times, especially when they have numerous daily tasks to complete, including playing a supporting role to their spouse in pastoral ministry. So when circumstances seem insurmountable, whom do we trust for help and counsel? Sadly, after years of suppressing feelings of sadness and loneliness, many keep silent and fall into depression. We master hiding behind a mask so well that we become experts in pretending that everything is fine, even in the company of those who know and love us.

The symptoms of depression creep in, often unnoticed, because they are common feelings that anyone can relate to, and we shun the idea that a child of God may actually be suffering from depression. David, a man after God's own heart, experienced his share of depressing moments. For years he was in exile hiding from Saul, who sought his life. Not knowing whom to trust or when he would take his rightful place as king of Israel, David sought solace in writing psalms that described his feelings. The thought of being caught tormented him day and night, and in his moments of affliction he wrote psalms, such as Psalm 102:7, 11, where he describes himself as a "sparrow alone on the housetop" and his days "like a shadow that lengthens" (NKJV).

Because of the high demands of pastoral ministry, many spouses may become depressed by the specific situations in their lives, and once these are resolved they begin to feel "normal" again. Unfortunately, others don't get over their traumatic events that easily. People in such situations need to seek help.

Situational Depression is a short-term form of depression resulting from a traumatic change in life. Such changes might involve moving to another parish, disappointment with expectations of pastoral ministry, spousal abuse or neglect, ongoing disagreement over a marital issue, loss of a loved one, unresolved childhood issues, or loss of a job. Any one of these could result in months and even years of sadness.

The symptoms, or warning signs, of such depression can include:

- a. Feelings of hopelessness, despair, and unworthiness, despite praise from spouse, family, and friends
- b. Chronic fatigue, even if your schedule is not hectic
- c. Poor concentration, which affects your ability to work, study, eat, sleep, and enjoy life
- d. Lack of interest in sex
- e. Feelings of anger toward loved ones, especially spouse and children, behind closed doors

Hope and help for hopelessness

Take comfort in the precious promises of hope. Psalm 145:18, 19 assures us that "the Lord is near to all who call upon Him. . . . He also will hear their cry and save them" (NKJV). The Lord wants to save us and lift us from the dark shadows that surround our everyday lives. We are guaranteed that God will never leave us nor forsake us, and "when we pass through the floods and storms of life He will be with us, and, greatly to be praised, they will not sweep over us" (Isaiah 43:2, paraphrased).

For those who are struggling with depression, the following suggestions might help you start on the road to wellness:

1. Seek professional help. The services of a Christian counselor can guide you on the road to healing and restoration. Don't let pride hinder you from a better life.
2. Find a prayer partner. Prayer with a trustworthy friend at least one day per week will build your prayer life and provide much-needed support.
3. Do journaling. Writing daily entries—not only about sad moments but also about praises to God and victories won—is very therapeutic.
4. Spend personal time alone with God. God is omnipresent—which is great news!—so seek His face anytime, anywhere. Alone time with God is time never wasted. Our nature walks, closet prayers, and early morning devotionals will help greatly. Tell it all to Jesus; He is eager to hear the prayers of His saints.
5. Get involved in diversional activities. Daily meditate on God's word, take that much-needed trip, or reward yourself for an accomplished goal. Take time to relax and enjoy a healthy hobby. Give motivational talks and provide spiritual mentorship to young pastoral wives.
6. Share your story. Encouraging other women who are experiencing similar challenges will help to heal and rebuild our own lives.
7. Provide yourself with good nutrition. Healthful eating feeds the mind and improves brain function. God wants us to prosper and be in good health. Eating a balanced diet rich in seeds, grains, vegetables, legumes, fruits, and nuts will increase our energy level and help ease depression.
8. Get adequate rest. Proper and planned rest relaxes, repairs, and rejuvenates the mind and body and will help to restore balance to the mind. If possible, get between seven and eight hours of sleep a night.
9. Get plenty of exercise. Walk with friends at least 30 minutes a day or enjoy some outdoor activity, even if you do it alone. Exercise is very effective in improving our overall mental health and is proven to help reduce depression and anxiety.

God's Word never fails. He publicly declares in Jeremiah 31:3 that He loves us "with an everlasting love" (NKJV). That means that each one of us is most precious in His sight, and that our lives are valuable to Him. So give Him your heart, and He will pour out His Spirit in you.

Stacy Harvey is an assistant lecturer in nursing at the University of the West Indies, Western Jamaica Campus. She is married to Christopher, and they have been married for 13 years. They have two children, Jonathan and Kristashay.

Abuse

Is This Really Love?

Eyes wide shut

“At first Mark was charming and romantic. He was a lawyer, a church elder, and a lay preacher. After a few amazing dates he proposed, and soon we were married. A month after the wedding I spent an evening with my friends. When I unlocked the door, he was waiting. He beat me for going out without him.” Amy (not her real name) looked down and bit her lip. “I’m a doctor...and yet I missed all the signs.”

For several years Amy experienced increasing levels of emotional, spiritual, physical and intimate abuse. Mark blamed Amy. If only she was more submissive, more perfect, more respectful, he wouldn’t have treated her this way. One day her boss called her into his office and asked her what was happening at home. He helped Amy to identify the abuse and find a safe way out of the escalating violence.

Amy sighed as the painful memories flickered through her body as well as her mind. “I wish I’d noticed how angry he was when he didn’t get his own way. I wish I’d challenged him when he insisted on listening to my phone calls and reading all my emails and messages. I wish I hadn’t convinced myself that his controlling behavior was protective love. I was confused because everyone at church thought he was the perfect Christian. No one suspected how abusive he was until I secretly filmed his behavior.”

Danger ahead!

As Amy discovered, it’s not always easy to spot an abuser. But there are some warning signs. Avoid people who insist on having their own way, and who become angry and irritable if they don’t. When someone suggests a plan for the evening, see if they are open to your ideas. Say: “That sounds great, but I’d really like to do this instead.” Watch how they respond. If he angrily insists on his own way, if she strives to win every argument, or if he belittles your opinions, they may have a tendency to be coercive and controlling.

Watch how a person responds when you, or someone else, needs help. Are they spontaneously kind and generous, or do they get annoyed at the interruption to their plans? Do they move towards people who need help, with a positive Good Samaritan attitude, or do they turn away and walk by on the other side?

Katya wants a Christian husband who is kind, humble, honest about himself and mature enough to take responsibility for his life. Whenever she’s introduced to a potential partner she asks: “How come someone like you is still single?” If he openly admits some past mistakes, describes his struggle to commit, or has a positive reason for being single, then she keeps on talking. If he blames his problems on others, criticizes previous girlfriends, or makes excuses for his behavior, then she crosses him off her list.

Vulnerable believers

As Christians we're taught to forgive others, and this can make us vulnerable. Abused spouses have been told to "turn the other cheek" and "forgive seventy-times seven." They stay at home and hide their bruised faces, isolate themselves from their friends and family, and tell themselves that if only they were more obedient, or more submissive, it wouldn't happen again. Sadly, some of them have been beaten to death.

We also strive to believe the best in others, not the worst, and to be kind, self-controlled, patient, peaceable, long-suffering and humble. These are all excellent virtues, but they can blind us to significant, and sometimes dangerous, defects in other people's characters, and prevent us from challenging those who treat us badly. Some abusers look for kind partners because they are more likely to be submissive, compliant and forgiving. Some Christians choose to take on a "challenging" partner as a "project," hoping to rescue them from their troubled life. But idealistic hopes are not the basis for a healthy, mutual and loving relationship when someone needs specialist help.

Is this really love?

Jesus came to show us what love looks like when it has a human body, a warm, smiling face, and a compassionate heart. Jesus also asks tough questions about love. Do you love God above everything else? Do you love other people the same way you love yourself? Are you comfortable serving those you love, putting your needs last, making sacrifices for them, and humbly sitting at the bottom of the table? Do you lift others up? Are you as compassionate towards others as Jesus would be?

Paul scatters relational wisdom, like salt, throughout his letters. Instead of using a yellow highlighter pen, he uses the words "one another" to emphasize healthy relational principles. These are things like accepting each other, comforting each other; rejoicing with each other; honoring each other; helping each other; forgiving each other; living peacefully with each other; being thankful to each other; encouraging each other; protecting each other; valuing each other; being kind to each other; and making sacrifices for each other. This is what real love looks like.

Test your love

If you want to know whether someone truly loves you, try measuring their love against the teachings of Jesus, his caring ministry, and Paul's epistles. Search the New Testament for the "one another" statements, study the relational wisdom in Romans 12, and read his poetic description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Ask yourself honestly whether the other person generously and joyfully does these loving things for you. And, if you want to know whether you are truly in love, ask yourself if you would freely and joyfully do these things for them for the rest of your life. This kind of reflection isn't the perfect test of a healthy, loving relationship, but it's a good place to start.

Abused?

If you're in an unhealthy relationship, recognize that what you are experiencing is not the self-sacrificial, kind, forgiving and generous love that God wants you to experience. You may have been told that you are ugly, useless, inadequate, unlovable, that everything that has gone wrong in the relationship is your fault, and that you deserve to be punished. This is not how God would

express his love to you. As a start, try reading a love letter from God, compiled from Bible verses, at www.fathersloveletter.com.

Take care of yourself and your children. Discover how to leave an abusive relationship safely. Find a trustworthy person who believes your story, someone who knows how to help people trapped in abusive relationships. It may be necessary to separate for a while and seeking skilled professional help. Our Church Manual makes provision for those who need to separate from an abusive partner, because it is intolerable and uncompassionate for spouses and children to stay in an abusive and dangerous relationship. When children grow up witnessing abuse in the home, it strongly increases their risk of abusing others.

There are some useful resources at www.enditnow.org. This Adventist website has useful information for those who are being abused, their pastors, and anyone who wants to support and protect people experiencing domestic abuse. Explore www.restoredrelationships.org, created by a Christian organization dedicated to informing churches about domestic abuse and helping those who are experiencing abuse. Their site contains an excellent Bible study pack for men's groups on what it really means to be a Christian man, thought-provoking videos and sound advice.

Be a proactive preventer

Know how to recognize the signs of abuse and be the person who believes the victim, even if their spouse is a pillar of your community. Most victims of severe abuse live with the situation for 2-3 years before seeking help, and often speak to several professionals before receiving the help they really need.

We need to stand up for those trapped in unhealthy relationships, protect them, and challenge their abusers safely and wisely. We need to be proactive about preventing abuse through regular relationship seminars, rigorous premarital counseling, providing newly-married couples with trained marriage mentors, and setting up safe systems and protection for victims.

Men's Ministries can mentor men who will lovingly protect and support the women in their lives. Women's Ministries can empower women to recognize abuse and know how to respond safely and wisely. Help parents understand the importance of developing comforting, loving, nurturing and playful attachments with their babies, toddlers and children. It's often impossible to identify the abusers and the victims in your congregation. Wives can abuse husbands and parents can abuse children. Make sure that good teaching, help and support is available to everyone.

*By Karen Holford
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What Can You Do?

In the face of something horrific, have a ready response.

When the unthinkable happens and someone you care about tells you they've suffered abuse, what do you do?

1. Ready yourself and your congregation to handle abuse, because it is all too common. Several ministries may be helpful in finding the right educational materials. See a list of resources in this issue.
2. Record everything. Write down the date, time, and content of all conversations you have with alleged victims and any others involved. Try to get as much information as possible before offering your opinion.

Work with the alleged victims to write a report of what they experienced. The report should include name, age, where they live, their occupation, when they first met the perpetrator, when the events took place, and what occurred. It should end with the statement: "I swear and affirm that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and ability" and their signature and the date.

3. Report to the appropriate authorities. Depending upon where you live, reporting any claim of child abuse may be mandated by law even if you can't prove it really happened. While the Bible tells us not to engage in needless lawsuits against one another, it also tells us to "be subject to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1, NIV). Covering up crime will bring disrepute on the church.

If the abuse is not a criminal matter but still a moral issue—for example, a pastor in an inappropriate relationship with a church member—it should be reported to the appropriate level of church administration.

If a person has been abused, encouraging them to confront the abuser alone isn't wise. It may be more appropriate for that confrontation to occur with another person present. In any case, we should be very careful not to retraumatize victims of abuse by sending them back to the person who violated them in the first place.

4. Refer both victim and perpetrator to appropriate counseling resources. Abidecounseling.com provides low-fee, biblically based, Adventist-affirming, Ellen White-informed counseling and coaching all over the world.

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Section IV

Resources



Helpful Websites

Adventist.org, the Official Website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

<https://www.adventist.org/en/>

You can find any information regarding the Church here, including news from each division, an outline of our distinctive beliefs, a list of entities, history, and much more.

Adventist Risk Management

<https://adventistrisk.org>

AdventistRisk.org has many helpful resources for your pastor spouse on pastoral risk management awareness and education, preparing for international pathfinder camporee, emergency planning, and more. The tools for keeping vulnerable children in your church safe are especially important. They can be found under Pastoral Risk Management Awareness and Education.

AdventSource

<https://www.adventsource.org>

AdventSource is the official leadership resource center for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. They partner with NAD departments and other ministry-focused organizations to develop, produce, and market targeted leadership resources and services to assist local congregations in fulfilling their mission.

EndItNow

<https://www.enditnow.org>

EndItNow is a global initiative to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence around the world. It aims to mobilize Seventh-day Adventists around the world and invites other community groups to join in to resolve this worldwide issue. On their website, they provide multiple important resources for keeping you, your family and your church safe from abusers, child predators, and others.

GC SDA Ministerial Spouses Association Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ministerialspouses/>

This online support group is for spouses of ministers employed by the Seventh-day Adventist church around the world. This includes spouses of pastors, conference administrators, chaplains, and missionaries who fulfill duties similar to pastoral work. All SDA ministerial spouses (including widow/ers) are welcome here!

GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment)

<https://www.netgrace.org>

Empowering Christian communities to recognize, prevent, and respond to abuse.

Hope of Survivors, The

<http://www.thehopeofsurvivors.org>

The Hope of Survivors provides support, help, and healing for victims of clergy sexual abuse.

Ministerial Spouses Association

<https://ministerial.adventist.org/spouses/>

This is the official website for spouses of Seventh-day Adventist pastors. Here you'll find digital books, archived Journal magazines, discipleship resources, conversation starters, PowerPoint presentations, and a full curriculum on how to be a ministry spouse.

Naked Truth Project, The

<https://thenakedtruthproject.com>

Opening eyes and freeing lives from the damaging effects of pornography.

New Freedom to Love: The truth about Love and Porn

<https://newfreedomtolove.org>

Restored Relationships

<https://www.restoredrelationships.org>

Restored is an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women.

Revival and Reformation

<https://www.revivalandreformation.org>

A global initiative under the umbrella of the Ministerial Association, this offers practical, inspirational resources for you, your family, your church, and your community.

Toucan Together

<https://toucantogogether.com>

Toucan is a fresh and unique online experience for couples ...giving you tools to build your relationship.

Recommended Reading Material:

What No One Tells the Pastors Wife by Gloria Lindsay Trotman

Available in digital format at <https://ministerial.adventist.org/spouses/resources/books-and-curriculum>.

The Pastor's Wife by Gloria Furman. Available at Amazon.com.

Sacred Privilege by Kay Warren. Available at Amazon.com

Letters to Pastor's Wives edited by Catherine J. Stewart. Available on Amazon.com.

You Can Still Wear Cute Shoes by Lisa McKay. Available on Amazon.com.

I'm More Than the Pastor's Wife by Lorna Dobson. Available on Amazon.com