

The Journal



A SHEPHERDESS INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

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Number 1

Thoughts for the New Year

1. God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.
 2. Dear God: I have a problem. It's me.
 3. Growing old is inevitable; growing up is optional.
 4. There is no key to happiness. The door is always open.
 5. Silence is often misinterpreted, but never misquoted.
 6. Do the math. Count your blessings.
 7. Faith is the ability to not panic.
 8. Laugh every day, it's like inner jogging.
 9. If you worry, you didn't pray. If you pray, don't worry.
 10. As a child of God, prayer is kind of like calling home every day.
 11. Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.
 12. The most important things in your home are the people.
 13. When we get tangled up in our problems, be still. God wants us to be still so He can untangle them.
 14. A grudge is a heavy thing to carry.
 15. Life is uncertain; eat dessert first.
 16. Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.
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Editor's Musings

One day a father was unloading church materials from the trunk of his car. His little daughter was standing near, and as the father unloaded the packages from the car, he laid them in the arms of the child. A young playmate watched the process. As parcel after parcel was laid in her arms, the playmate friend began to fear that the load was becoming too heavy, and said: "Don't you think you have as much as you can carry?"

"Never mind," said the girl in a happy tone, "Father knows how much I can carry and he won't overload me." What a trustful little girl. There was no danger of stress or injury because of her confidence in her father.

What a lesson from a little child! Are you and I—faithful, hardworking, ministry wives—"unloading" the car on our own, carrying too much, balancing much more than we should, because we do not allow our Heavenly Father to hand us just the amount He knows we can carry.

A new year has begun. Resolutions have been made. Are they balanced expectations? How much are you and I trying to carry into this new year? Will we wait and let our Heavenly Father guide us in what He wants us to do for Him, or are we frantically grabbing packages of work that will end up physically and emotionally crushing us.

You are a valuable woman. You are valuable most of all to Jesus. He created you with just the amount of physical and emotional strength He knew you would need to carry what He gives you. He bought you with His own blood. You are valuable to His bride, the church. Ministry wives give more volunteer time and monetary contribution to the church than any other group of people. You are valuable to your family. They depend on your strength to encourage them.

In this new year, let's resolve to let Jesus hand us only the burdens He knows we can carry. He has promised us that His yoke is easy and His burdens are light.

God bless us every one.

Love,



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Coping With Stress

Violet John

Violet John is married to Dr. M. C. John, president for Northern Union of SDA at New Delhi, India. They have two grown children, Marvin and Marilyn. Violet works as the Secretary to the Treasurer of the Northern Union. Violet graduated from Spicer Memorial College with a degree in Secretarial Science and English. She did her post graduate studies in Counseling and Psychology in the Philippines while her husband did his doctoral studies in Educational Administration. Violet is a people person. Her hobbies include visitation, helping out wherever she is needed, baking and entertaining people in her home.



Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. It is not nervous tension but the wear and tear of life. Stress describes the effects of the body's reaction to pressure.

The source of stress is called the **stressor**. It can be physical, social, or psychological. The mind interprets it as pleasant or unpleasant. The following are some stressors:

Change in work responsibilities, working hours or conditions, change in living conditions, financial status, residence, school, church activities or social activities, a child leaving home, trouble with the in-laws, a spouse who begins or stops work; starting or finishing school, trouble with a boss, family gatherings, vacations, the Christmas season, a minor violation with the law, marital separations, loans, the death of a spouse or family member, jail term, personal injury or illness, marriage, being fired from work, pregnancy, sex difficulties, an addition to the family, outstanding personal achievement, etc.

Eustress and Distress

Stress does not have to be totally avoided, for it is essential to life. For man to survive in his environment,

he must constantly adapt himself to any demand made upon him. He has to resist anything that threatens his existence. He may be fully relaxed and asleep, yet he is still under some stress. A man's heart must continue to beat and pump blood, the intestines must continue to digest the night's dinner and the muscles must continue to move the chest for respiration. His brain continues to function even when he dreams. Only a dead person is completely free from stress.

Stress can either be extremely pleasant or unpleasant to the individual. If it is extremely pleasant, giving the individual a euphoric feeling, the stress is called "Eustress." But if it is very unpleasant, the person is in a state of "Distress."

Type A Behavior Pattern (TABP)

Before we can see why stress is bad and how we can cope with stress, it is important to know why some individuals are more prone to stress. Have you heard of Type A and Type B behavior patterns? Type A personalities are people who are more prone to stress; consequently, they are more prone to heart diseases.

These are people who are extremely competitive. They strive to reach the high goals they have set for

themselves. They are often impatient, restless, and hyper-alert. Type A people feel they are always under the pressure of time and under the challenge of responsibility. Their face muscles are usually tense and they are so committed to their vocation or profession, that other aspects of their lives are relatively neglected.

Characteristics of TABP

Basic Insecurity: Studies reveal that deep within the TABP is the sense of insecurity. Thus, he continually needs self-assurance and self-conviction to capture the respect and admiration of his peers and superiors, not necessarily their love or affection. The Type A person needs to achieve a lot and this leads to exhaustion and depression.

Studies also reveal that many coronary heart disease patients are very aggressive, ambitious and strive compulsively to achieve goals for power and prestige.

Aggressiveness: People are not born with aggressive behavior. They learn these behaviors one way or another. Parents play a significant role. If parents are aggressive, children will model this behavior.

People with aggressive or Type A personalities were asked to complete a survey. One of the questions asked about the treatment they received from their mothers and fathers. Men who were more Type A men said their fathers were severe and physically punished them often. Instead of feeling guilty, these Type A men felt resentful towards their fathers. Women who were more Type A also stated their mothers physically punished them often.

Aggressive people are often frowned upon, but TABPs have a need to be aggressive. As a result of striving for the best, they earn prizes, promotions, salary increases, bonuses, plaques of appreciation and other forms of recognition. Thus the aggressive

person's need is fulfilled and he is stimulated to constantly pursue further success.

Hostility: Hostility comes in three forms-greed, envy, and jealousy. It stems from feelings of rejection, frustration and humiliation. So hostility is an attempt for "I" to overpower, "I" to get what "I" want.

Basic insecurity, aggressiveness and hostility are the characteristics of a TABP person. So this behavior is stress prone. Stress is self-induced. The Type A person thrives in a stressful world. He struggles hard and his heart often pays the price.

Why is "stress" such a hot topic? It is because studies reveal that people who have more stress are more likely to have health problems. Some illnesses that are caused by stress

People who have more stress are more likely to have health problems.

include heart problems such as heart attacks, hypertension and migraines. Severe stress can affect the immune system, decreasing its ability to fight off the invading bacteria in our bodies. Stress runs people down. Studies reveal that run-down people suffer more from allergies, cancer, etc.

What To Do If You Are Type A

To deny the existence of these underlying forces and characteristics of TABP is like being an ostrich that buries its head in the sand. It would surely help the Type A person if he faces and accepts reality. Self-awareness, coupled with introspection, facilitates one's growth and

maturity, change and adaptability.

To resolve the problem of insecurity, it is absolutely necessary for an insecure person to anchor himself deeply to a higher, omnipotent being called God. The Type A personality must make God the center and end of life. God's Word must become the rule of his life. In it he finds assurance and comfort, guidance and counsel.

Security is further enhanced as the Type A man or woman makes a personal inventory of the capacities and qualities he or she possesses. They should take into account the privileges and opportunities they have enjoyed, the honors and blessings they have received, as well as the achievements and services they have rendered. Such an appraisal produces a good feeling within, the feeling of self-worth, self-respect and self-confidence.

There is also security in recognizing and accepting the limitations of self, its liabilities and weaknesses. It frees the Type A person from undue pride, arrogance and recklessness.

A person who is relatively secure is less threatened and defensive; hence, less hostile and aggressive. As he becomes more confident and assured of himself, his struggle becomes less chronic as does his hard-driving lifestyle. Gradually the Type A person relaxes and tends to be more flexible.

Another issue that a Type A person needs to resolve is his attitude toward life which is reflected in his work as well as his relationships with other people. He must see the loveliness of life in the beauty of the world he lives in, the humanity of man and the providential out-working of his experiences. What is needed is for him to pause for a while and take time to observe and appreciate God's book of nature, to relate to others and get to know them and review God's leading in various events he has gone through.

*There must be
time for rest
and relaxation.*

Moreover, the Type A man must know how to live one day at a time. Instead of filling the day with memories and deadlines of tasks to be done, he must make room for unexpected events and surprises. He must allow sufficient time for each scheduled task but he must realize that some jobs are of less importance or demand and they should be postponed.

Two famous cardiologists have said that to "hurry sickness," remind yourself that life is "unfinishedness." They say they have seen many patients who are seriously ill, yet still they want to believe that they can finish all that needs to be done by the end of the day. The tasks they need to complete supercede their sicknesses. "Of course," the doctors go on to say, "these people can be jumping from high buildings, taking poison or putting a bullet through themselves because what they don't seem to realize is when they are dead, everything is finished. A dead man is a finished man; there is no more time to complete tasks!"

Patience is often a trait of character that the Type A person must develop. He must ask God to help him take life in its stride; to face a crisis or any turn of events calmly; to be tolerant with others and accept them as they are; to take time out to enjoy life and help him take control of his life instead of being controlled by his environment.

So, if you are a Type A individual, you must know how to rest and

relax, even for a brief period of time, at regular intervals. Relaxing can take the form of exercise, meditation, hobbies, arts, music, special projects, play and other activities or perhaps through an occasional fantasy. Visualize yourself as a relaxed, flexible individual who enjoys life at its best. By God's grace, you can re-engineer your behavior pattern!

How To Cope With Stress

Some events that bring about stress were listed above. Life events may either be pleasurable or traumatic to a person. Many of the events listed bring pain to an individual and his significant others. Yet, it is important to remember that the sooner the event is faced and accepted, no matter how painful its realities may be, the better. However, faith and hope, courage and patience are needed. Adjustments to normalcy are made easier when these elements are involved.

Many people try to run away from their problems by resorting to fantasy and denial, liquor and drugs, rationalization and projection, but the problem remains within. No one can really run away from his problems. When such escape mechanisms are used, life becomes more complicated and more problems arise.

Setting of Goals and Priorities

In view of the changes brought by life events, the person may at times get confused and lost, not knowing what to do next, where to turn to. This calls for focus of goals and priorities, clarification of needs and values. What does the individual really want to achieve, both in work and in life? How can such goals be attained? How much time is needed?

When setting goals, four criteria are recommended. Goals must be (a) specific, (b) pertinent, (c) attainable, and (d) measurable. Goals should be

set according to a person's needs and values, resources and opportunities.

Commitment


Regardless of the goals established, a person must have commitment. Commitment turns into action. It adds meaning to life. And it is important to not be just committed to your goals; you must be committed to God for He knows what lies ahead and what is best for you. The Bible says, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass ... In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

To one whose life is committed to God and His will, events will turn out to be an outworking of the divine purpose. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Therefore, whatever event may happen, the Christian will praise God and be thankful.

Time Out

When the game becomes more tense and stressful to the players, the coach usually calls for a "time out." Jesus Christ said, "Come apart and rest awhile." There must be time for rest and relaxation. God instituted, at the time of Creation, the Sabbath for man. Then He made it as a law, "Remember the Sabbath day."

Live One Day At a Time

God, the Father, knows our needs and will gladly give. God also knows our tomorrows and will take care of it. Past is past and is not much use except for the good experiences and lessons it has taught us. Let God take care of the past too. What is real is what is now. This is what God wants His children to enjoy. And by His grace, anyone, even those with Type A personalities, can re-engineer their behavior patterns and learn to live God-centered lives. 

Expectations and the Golden Rule

Reingard Schwenger

We had been in our last district for awhile when I had an encounter with a single woman in our church. She told me how disappointed she had been with me. I was aghast. What had I done to disappoint her? She proceeded to tell me how excited she had been when she found I was moving into the area. Because we were close in age, she thought we could become good friends. So she observed me for a few weeks. She saw that I did not greet every single person with a handshake even though I was a pastor's wife. She was very disappointed because I did not fit the image she had of a pastor's wife. Needless to say, I was completely dumbfounded.

Have you ever experienced a situation similar to the one I had? Have people expected things of you which you knew nothing about? Perhaps people have withdrawn from you and you never knew why. Or perhaps you've been on the other side. Someone did not do or act in a certain way and you were disappointed in her.

Do you belong to one of these groups? Are you a person who has expectations of others or are you the person others expect things of because of your position? Probably all of us have experienced both.

What do we do with expectations? Must we fulfill all the expectations of others? Do we have to fulfill any? Do other people have the right to expect things of us? Are there just and unjust expectations?

Jesus dealt with expectations all the time. The Bible tells us how Jesus dealt with them. Jesus helped when people asked for help.

Matthew 8:1-4 tells how a leper asked Jesus to heal him and Jesus did. Matthew 14:28-31 describes a scenario where the disciples were in a boat. Suddenly Jesus came toward them. He was walking on water. Peter wanted to join Jesus on the water. When he looked away from Jesus, he began to sink. Peter asked Jesus for help and Jesus saved him. The passages in Matthew 9:27-29 tell how Jesus healed some blind people because of their faith in Him. These are just a few examples of Jesus' response to those who asked for help. Throughout the Bible, we find people in need. They had expectations of Jesus and they expressed them. When they asked Jesus for help, He gave it. He knew what they needed before they asked, but He fulfilled their expectations only when they verbalized their needs.

Sometimes Jesus helped those who didn't ask.

Reingard Schwenger has two sons. They live in Freudenstadt, a little town in the Blackwood Forest in Germany. She enjoys reading and playing the piano.



According to Matthew 8:28-32, two possessed people were healed by Jesus. Matthew 1:22 tells of a possessed person who was blind and dumb. Jesus healed him. In both cases, there is no report that Jesus was asked to heal these persons. They were not able to express their needs, but Jesus knew their needs better than they did themselves.

Sometimes Jesus did not fulfill the expectations of people, even when they asked him to.

We read about the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Matthew 16:1-4. They wanted to test Jesus and asked Him to perform a miracle. Also, the high priest and elders asked Jesus to show His authority. Jesus knew these people had no real needs or questions; He knew their motives were false. They were not in need. Jesus did not fulfill all unspoken expectations.

The Jewish people expected a Messiah who would free them of Roman rule. Jesus did not fulfill those expectations. The Pharisees wanted Jesus to respect and take notice of them. He did not. The disciples' world fell apart when Jesus died. They had hoped He would be a great ruler and they would be His officials. Jesus did not fulfill those expectations. Jesus did not fulfill people's expectations when all they wanted were compensations for their good deeds.

Those people who do things because they hope to be compensated will find themselves shunned by Jesus. One day, Jesus will say to such people, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" Matthew 7:21-23.

We do well when we learn from Jesus. He fulfilled some expectations while ignoring others. He made some people happy while putting others off. It is not possible nor even good to try and fulfill all expectations. Of course, Jesus had a big advantage over us. He could look

into people's hearts and see their real motives, wishes, and needs. We can't read others' thoughts or see wishes in their eyes. Neither can they see ours. Certainly when we know someone really well, we can better guess their motivations but mistakes do happen. Therefore, it is important to express our expectations. We should not expect a person to automatically know our needs. Jesus loved to help people but He often waited for them to ask for His help.

Paul Watzlawick tells the following story in his book, *Directions for Being Unhappy*. A man wants to hang a picture. He has a nail but no hammer. The neighbor has one. And so the man decides to ask the neighbor to lend him a hammer. But then he thinks, "What if my neighbor refuses to lend me his hammer? Only yesterday he hardly greeted me. Maybe he was in a hurry. But maybe his hurry was only pretense and he has a grudge against me? But why? I haven't done anything to hurt him; he must be imagining things. If somebody wanted to borrow a tool from me, I would give it right away. Why doesn't he? How can he refuse such a little favor? People like him just poison your life. And then he even imagines that I depend on him. Only because he has a hammer. No, that's too much!

And so he rushes to the neighbor's house and rings the doorbell. The neighbor opens the door and the man shouts, "Keep your old hammer, you boor!"

Such is the case when we think we know what others are thinking!

If you live your life with an attitude of expectation, you make your own life and the life of others unnecessarily difficult. Your own will be difficult because you will be disappointed over and over. Others, because you will put them under pressure. It is impossible to react normally to people who have

decidedly expectant attitude. They will always be thinking, "Have I done everything right? Have I omitted something I should have done?"

Does it mean it is wrong to have expectations? And if you do, what should you do with them? Jesus answers these questions when he gave us the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" Matthew 7:12. Jesus wants us to be active in doing good. In other words:

If you want someone to approach you, you should approach others.

If you want to be invited, you should invite others.

If you want respect, you should respect others.

If you want others to take part in your life, you should take part in others' lives.

If you want someone to help you, you should help others.

If you want someone to call you, you should call others.


If you want someone to visit you, you should visit others.

If you want others to speak to you kindly, you should speak kindly to others.

The list could go on forever.

My grandmother wrote the following in my friendship book: "Do you want happiness in life? Then make others happy, for the joy we give returns into our hearts."

So few words, but so true. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule because He wanted to give us something good. He knew that people who live according to this rule always get returns of something good and they feel as if they were receiving a gift although they are the ones who are giving.

God wants us to experience how happy it makes us when we can help to make others happy. Our lives will be richer when we enrich the lives of others. Our lives are empty when we think only of ourselves and our own expectations. 

His Ministry or Yours?

Mary Barrett

I wasn't aware that anything was wrong at first. It began when Jonathan and I were running a series of evangelistic meetings. By the end of our talks, Jonathan would have to help me get off the stool that I had been sitting on as we presented the program. I was too stiff to get off by myself. We didn't take too much notice of it. Perhaps I was getting old? After all, I was 29 we joked! But then, at times, I found it difficult to walk. My legs felt as if they were filled with cement. It took an unbelievable amount of effort to move one leg in front of the other. Again we joked oh yes, a touch of arthritis! I would definitely be the one with the Zimmer frame before Jonathan!

Not long after, church members began to whisper to my husband that I was looking tired. They noticed that I couldn't turn my neck, that I was looking stiff, "Is she ill?" they asked. "No," he would reply, "there's nothing wrong with Mary. She's fine. You're imagining it."

Slowly other symptoms surfaced. I would go to bed feeling stiff and wake up in the middle of the night paralyzed with pain. Nothing moved. Not my legs, my head, my feet, nothing apart from my right arm and that was only with the most excruciating effort. On some occasions my mouth lacked movement and it was a struggle to speak.

Most nights I would wake Jonathan not knowing what to do.

My body was so rigid that I felt as if someone had strapped me in a suit of armor that was several sizes too small! I also felt as if someone had lit up a match and tossed it at me. Inside my body, a fire raged! I was scared. I was frightened. We stopped the jokes.

A trip to the doctor confirmed that I had been working too hard. Working too hard in ministry. Working too hard at being a mother. Working too hard at being a wife. The doctor said, "All I needed was some rest and I would be fine. No big deal. Nothing to worry about."

That was 13 years ago. "No big deal" resulted in an illness called Ankylosing Spondylitis, triggered off by overwork and stress. "No big deal" turned into a health problem that would dominate my life for the next 10 years. "No big deal" changed my life completely and that of my husband and our two daughters then aged three and two.

However, the tragic thing about "No big deal" is that it need not ever have happened, if I had not been working so hard! And the even greater tragedy is that I loved everything I was doing so much, that I wasn't aware that I was setting myself up for disaster.

How is it with you? Is your ministry controlling your life or are you controlling your ministry? Are you working so hard that you too are laying the foundations for something to go terribly wrong?

Mary is paid by the local church to work in ministry with her husband. She is also a writer and speaker. They have two daughters in their late teens and for relaxation, she just enjoys being with family and friends!



God wants us to enjoy our ministry, but He knows that in order to do that we need to be aware of the situations and pressures that can control our work and bring confusion into our lives. Why don't we then focus on some of the advice that God shares with us through the lives of men and women who held down jobs in Bible days? Not all these people worked in ministry, yet God's advice to them can also be applied to our work situation.

Let's meet our first worker.

The Compromising Employee— Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew's work was really important to him. In fact, his work meant so much to him that he would do anything to prosper in his job, even if it meant becoming a liar and a cheat. He had no problems in doing what everyone else did to become successful. He surrendered his principles of right and wrong, so that he could be accepted by his workmates and achieve his goal to become wealthy!

As you know, Matthew was a tax collector. Tax collectors had a bad reputation. Everyone knew that they abused the system and Jews who helped to operate this corrupt civil service were considered to be the lowest of the low. Matthew was such a man. He sold his birthright and betrayed his people for material gain.

Matthew achieved his aim. He was rich in money, yet poor in integrity. He was willing to compromise what was important to achieve his ambition. For some of us our work experience is like that of Matthew's.

We are doing things that deep down we know are not right. Sure, we may not be stealing money, but we compromise on other things—our health, our ethics, our honesty, our relationships, our authenticity as a Christian and sometimes even our morals.

God's advice to those of us who are like Matthew is found in Matthew 9:9 where Jesus says, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." In other words, Jesus is saying "Be like Me in the way that you minister. You do not need to compromise on the things that you know to be 'right' to be a successful pastor."

Albert Carr says in the *Harvard Business Review*, "To be a winner a person must play to win. This does not mean that he must be ruthless, cruel, harsh or treacherous. On the contrary, the better his reputation for integrity, honesty and decency the better his chances for victory will be in the long run."

As workers for God we do not have to give into the temptation to surrender our principles, to play around with honesty, to be frightened to stand up for what is right or wrong, so that we can introduce people to Christ or experience job satisfaction.

The most thrilling part of Matthew's work experience was when God called him out of compromise. He was then able to work with Matthew in such a way that he became an effective evangelist and a writer. We do not have to compromise to minister in a positive way.

The Hurting Worker —Ruth 1

Let's open up the work file of a woman who let her work affect the way she thought about herself.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die." That is how it was for our next worker. She defined who she was by what she did. When what she did ceased to occur, inwardly she lost her desire to live.

Naomi had a job that was highly valued in the times in which she lived. She was a wife and a mother. In Old Testament times, caring for a family was the most important job that a woman could have and Naomi

excelled in her job. However, Naomi believed that she was **nothing** without her family and her work. She defined herself according to her work. Holly Miller puts it this way, "Naomi didn't see herself merely as Naomi, instead she was Naomi, the wife of Elimelech and mother of Mahlon and Chilion, and mother-in-law to Ruth and Oprah. She believed that the qualifiers that followed her name established her identity. Her worth came from the words between the hyphens. Her value as a person was all confused with her work as a wife, mother and mother-in-law. Her significance was determined by her job.

When her husband and sons died, Naomi lost her reason for living. She told her friends to call her Mara instead of Naomi, which means "Bitter." Looking at her words under a microscope we see that Naomi was mourning the loss of her identity and her self-esteem as well as those she loved.

One of the dangers of ministry is that it can become so much a part of our self-esteem that we can't survive without it. We cannot live without our work. We define our value by the number of baptisms we have or don't have, by the increase or decrease of our congregations, or by those who applaud our work or by those who give us the "thumbs down."

For those of us who can relate to the work experience of Naomi, God says in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

In His advice God is saying to us, "Don't base your worth on your job, base it on My love instead."

Something freeing happens in ministry when we allow God's love for us to be the compelling force in the way in which we minister, rather than the expectations of our job descriptions. Letting God's love be

the most dominant thing in our lives, not only means that we will avoid ministering on “automatic pilot” but that “His love” will give us the passion to “pastor” with enthusiasm.

The Blinkered Worker—1 Samuel 3:1-18

Let’s meet the man who was a genuine workaholic.

This man really worked hard, in fact, probably no one worked as hard as him. He held one of the most important jobs in Israel. He worked as a high priest. He was zealous in his job, his service to God, came before anything else. His diligence, his dedication to duty was never to be doubted, but his devotion to work had the most devastating consequences.

Eli’s life was consumed with spiritual busyness. As a result, he had very little time for father/son relationships and his boys not only drifted away from their father, they drifted away from their heavenly father too.

Eli’s preoccupation with his occupation meant that he had no time for his family. He had no time to be a husband, a father, and a friend. He had no time to discipline his children’s defiant behavior, no time to guide his sons in what was right or wrong, no time to think through the way he was responding to his sons’ sins. He had no time for anything, but work, work, work.

Billy Sunday was the king of revivalists in the early twentieth century. Thousands would come to hear him speak. He was so popular that his name was on the front pages of the newspapers wherever he went and his preaching inspired the Prohibition Amendment. He was not only well known, but he was successful too. After 39 years of ministry, over one million people had come forward in response to his altar calls. He was a religious superstar.

But he was not a superstar at home! He and his wife who worked with him were often away from home for months at a time. He often preached 7 days a week, 4 times a day and his four children knew very little of their father. While Mum and Dad were busy rescuing others from the clutches of Satan their children had no one to rescue them. Their sons were in and out of relationships and disastrous marriages. Two of their ex-wives blackmailed the Sundays by threatening to go public with the “truth” about the family. The boys also spent most of their lives battling with debt. In 1933 the oldest son committed suicide.

A little while after this, Bill with tear-filled eyes said to his wife, “Ma, where did I go wrong? Where did I go wrong?”

*God reminds us that
nurturing relationships
with those we love
is of more importance
than what we achieve.*

If our work experience is like that of Eli, God’s advice in Luke 10:42 says, “. . . but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

God reminds us that nurturing relationships with those we love is more important than what we achieve. Remember Martha? She was a great achiever, and yet it was Mary, Jesus praised for valuing relationships more than achievements.

How important is it to you to be doing a great job in ministry when those you share your home with are lonely for your love, your company, and your guidance?

We’ve met three workers who let their work control their lives. Let’s meet a worker who was never controlled by her work. We can learn how this happened by opening up the work resumé of a woman. She worked hard, achieved much, and yet had balance in her life!

A Balanced Worker—Acts 16:14

She was successful. She was admired as a shrewd businesswoman; she was highly respected in her community. She was in a luxury business and had the money, huge house, and servants to prove it. As a dealer in purple Lydia had made it.

But she had something else that people noticed about her—she had a strong relationship with God. However busy and pressured her work life was, she never let it interfere with her spiritual life. Lydia not only set aside time to be with God, but she also made time to meet with other women for prayer and support.

Lydia shows us how a person can be committed, conscientious and successful in their work without letting their work control their lives.

What was her secret? Why did her work never monopolize her life?

Possibly because she followed God’s advice as found in Matthew 6:33. “Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiatives, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.” *The Message Bible*.

I shared earlier how I let ministry control my life. When I look back on those crazy, crammed-filled days, I know that even though I was putting 100 percent into my work, 100 percent into being a wife and mother, I was putting very little time into inviting God to direct the things I did for Him. Sure, I was reading my Bible, but in a sense, I wasn’t.

And even now, despite my illness,

despite knowing God's advice, the battle of letting my work control my life, still has to be fought.

I trained for the ministry and am employed by my husband's church to work alongside him in pastoral ministry. More often or not, I end up working at least 3 times the amount of time that I am paid to work. Why? There are too many needs, too many things to be done, too many people to tell about God.

But I am changing. By making sure that I spend time with God and with others, I am learning how to live with balance in my work.

Spending time with God reminds me that my desire to be His servant, only truly happens when my life is fully connected to God's heart, when I am dependent upon God-initiatives in making things happen in our church, and when I rely on God's provision of His Holy Spirit, rather than my own power. When I spend time with God I am more inclined to put His advice about my ministry into action.

Following the example of Lydia I also make sure that I spend time with a Bible Worker in a nearby church. Once a week we meet and pray for our families, our churches, individual members, issues that dominate our churches, for outreach, etc. Afterwards, we both have the assurance that God is in control of our ministry. And we both rejoice at the ways in which God has worked with concerns that we have shared with Him. (Perhaps the reports that workers hand in to their Presidents, should have a section that says "time spent with God, time spent with other ministers for support and encouragement!")

Your ministry is important to God. He wants you to enjoy it, to be successful in it, but He wants you to remember that He called you to minister with Him, not on your own. Why don't you ensure that every day

you spend time with God and invite Him to take control of your ministry rather than letting your ministry

take control of you. Then your ministry will definitely be His and not just yours!



Life's Hints

- ❖ Compliment three people every day.
- ❖ Watch a sunrise at least once a year.
- ❖ Sing in the shower.
- ❖ Treat everyone you meet like you want to be treated.
- ❖ Strive for excellence, not perfection.
- ❖ Plant a tree on your birthday.
- ❖ Return borrowed vehicles with the gas tank full.
- ❖ Never waste an opportunity to tell someone you love them.
- ❖ Whistle.
- ❖ Leave everything a little better than you found it.
- ❖ Think big thoughts but relish small pleasures.
- ❖ Become the most positive and enthusiastic person you know.
- ❖ Surprise loved ones with little unexpected gifts.
- ❖ Floss your teeth.
- ❖ Learn CPR.
- ❖ Be forgiving of yourself and others.
- ❖ Take time to smell the roses.
- ❖ Say "thank you" a lot.
- ❖ Say "please" a lot.
- ❖ Avoid negative people.
- ❖ Buy whatever kids are selling on card tables in their front yards.
- ❖ Wear polished shoes.
- ❖ Remember other people's birthdays.
- ❖ Rekindle old friendships.
- ❖ Commit yourself to constant improvement.
- ❖ Focus on making things better not bigger.
- ❖ Be kinder than necessary.
- ❖ Carry jumper cables in your trunk.

Help! Dad's Out of Town

Cheryl Smith

Dad left on a Friday for a long anticipated missions trip to Africa. I and our two teens, Sierra and Michael, remained at home. Monday evening Grandma and Grandpa called to see how we were getting along.

"Everything is going fine," I gushed, "Usually things fall apart when Scott is away. But so far we've had no problems. Even the weather is unseasonably warm for January!" Little did I know the household disasters soon to be unleashed.

The following morning, I got up and the house was cold. Our furnace, which had been temperamental lately, had decided overnight to stop completely.

"No problem," I assured the kids. "I'll call our friend, Rich." He was glad to help but couldn't arrive until after work.

Sierra and Michael went off to school, so I settled down in a room with our two cats and a space heater to wait for Rich to arrive. With a little poking and prodding, he soon had the furnace blasting.

"You fixed it!" I cried. "What did you do?"

"I'm not sure," he confessed. "I really didn't do anything special; I just jiggled these wires."

I went to sleep that night confident that I could jiggle wires all week if necessary until Scott returned.

My confidence was short lived. By

noon the next day the furnace was down again and no amount of jiggling seemed to help. I called the heating repair service Rich had suggested. Around 2:30 p.m., "Shorty" arrived. Shorty reset the furnace and it burst to life like it was brand new.

By 5:00 p.m., I was back on the phone. "Shorty, my furnace is down again," I told him. He agreed to send someone over first thing in the morning.

Meanwhile the unseasonably warm weather I'd bragged about to my parents earlier in the week had vanished. The temperature was plummeting and the weatherman warned that an ice storm was on its way.

I was grateful when Craig (serviceman #3) was able to find the root of the problem: a faulty control box. Soon the furnace burst to life with warm authority. I was ever so thankful for the heat pouring into the house. The predicted ice storm had arrived overnight, and outdoors everything was coated in a quarter inch of it.

Craig left. I went upstairs to send an email to Scott in Africa. It never reached him. By 8:00 a.m. the power was out. "Don't worry," I told the kids. "We have the gas fireplace. We'll simply camp out in the living room with the fireplace on." Outside, the wind picked up. We collected candles

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and flashlights and stayed indoors with our coats on, listening to the ice-burdened branches crashing down all around us. Whump! A branch hit the roof and bounced onto the ground. I ventured out into the yard past the tangle of branches to survey the roof. There was some debris up there, but it seemed we had escaped any major damage.

Friday dawned sunnier and warmer—barely. I began by checking out the basement. The sump pump indeed was overflowing. However, the floor sloped not toward the drain, but towards another part of the basement, which I had failed to clear! We now faced a filled sump pit and an equally saturated drain field. I lit some more candles and assigned the kids to start carrying buckets of water upstairs to the kitchen sink.

About that time, Sierra discovered a second leak. The branch that fell yesterday had indeed damaged the roof. Water had run along the inside wall until it oozed out the baseboard, soaking the carpet. With wind advisories still in effect, I realized I was going to have to patch the roof. The situation seemed to be spiraling out of control.

A phone call to my dad gave me the practical steps of how to fix a leaky roof. We bundled into the car, and drove slowly to Home Depot to gather supplies for what I assumed would be a minor leak. Clearing the roof of debris, however, we unearthed a neat four-inch circle and the two-foot branch that had speared our roof. Another slow trip to Home Depot was needed.

Finally by mid-afternoon, I managed a satisfactory patch job. The kids joked that I used so much tar that the entire roof could fall down and my patch would still be there. I really didn't care as long as it kept the water out.

The basement was a different story. Sierra and Michael had

brought gallons of water up the basement stairs seemingly with little effect. They were tired. I was tired. But there could be no stopping if we wanted to prevent further flooding.

The phone rang. It was a friend calling to check on us. Within the hour she and another helper arrived with a fresh supply of towels, buckets, and flashlights. We managed to string an extension cord to a neighbor with power and by 6 p.m. the power finally came back on.

Perhaps you've been through similar experiences. Why is it that things always go awry when husbands go out of town? In sleepless moments, I pondered these and similar questions and I think God gave me some answers.

Get An Outside Perspective

In the midst of the crisis, my perspective on the situation became clouded. Common sense solutions my friends later suggested hadn't even occurred to me. And I would never have known what to purchase for roof repairs if I hadn't talked to my dad. Without the valuable advice of others, things would have turned out far worse.

Turn Hardship Into A Memory

The hardships notwithstanding, the entire experience will be a memory the kids and I will treasure forever. One night, we went to a cheap movie and out to dinner to get warm. Later we played games by candlelight. We pulled together and got the job done.

Don't Let Satan Undermine Your Mission

God wasn't unleashing hellish demons on us. It was simply life's events mixing with my inexperience. What Satan wanted to do, however, was embitter me against my husband and the work God has called him to. Instead, I needed to thank God for

His provisions and remind Michael and Sierra that we still had food, shelter, blankets, etc., far more than many people in the world. And I needed to tell them that this wasn't only their dad's mission, it was our mission as well.

In 1 Samuel 30, we read about David's pursuit of a raiding party of Amalekites. Some of his men were simply too exhausted from previous conflicts to continue on. Leaving them with the supplies, David marched on with 400 soldiers. They quickly effected a decisive victory against the Amalekites. Later those who fought complained about sharing the spoil with those who stayed behind.

"David replied, 'No my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the forces that came against us. The share of the men who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle'" (1 Samuel 30:23, 24).

The week my husband was in Africa, 96 Ghanaian men and women prayed to receive Christ, and 27 African pastors were trained to share their faith more effectively. A team of five Americans was used by God to change lives and have their own lives changed forever by what they experienced. A missionary couple was encouraged. Needed literature was supplied to a seminary. A young doctor returning from study abroad became a believer. And nearly \$1,500 was freed up to aid in the translation and distribution of evangelistic materials. Sierra, Michael and I had a part in all that. In willingly letting Scott go—in staying by "the stuff" (as some translations call it) we've been privileged to share in an incredible harvest. Do I regret Scott's absence? Not at all.

But just wait until Mom goes out of town!



He Approves of Me!

Becki Knobloch

Becki and her husband, Pastor John Knobloch, have two children, Natasha and Karisha. Becki is John's assistant pastor and she thoroughly enjoys her pastoral and health work. Her main focus is Women's Ministries. Becki also enjoys working in her garden tending both vegetables and flowers.



Sunday morning's warm sunlight streamed through my bedroom windows, warming my covers. The sun was especially welcome because of our long, dreary, wet winter. What warmed me even more were the thoughts that were aching to be processed from the weekend's seminar. Our speaker had said that we each have God's approval, that God even says about each one of us, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

I have loved Jesus all my life—at least in my head. But my heart has struggled to accept and feel His love. As the warm sun lightened the room, God's Spirit lightened and brightened my soul. It seemed God led my thoughts.

God would have sent Jesus to earth to save even one person, even me. Therefore, He loves me just like He loves Jesus. And I can personalize that text, "This is my beloved daughter, Becki, in whom I am well pleased."

But why, I thought, has it taken me so long to internalize and personalize God's love and approval, His pleasure in me? As a little girl, I'd wanted my father's approval but never felt like I quite had it. I remember one day in particular. As my dad was finishing his lunch, I was clearing the table and wiping it. He is so proud of me, I thought, as I tried to do my best to please him. But

as I finished, instead of commending me, he pointed out some crumbs that I had left behind. I was crushed! Nothing I could do ever seemed to please him.

Later, as I was finishing my Master's degree, I even asked him if he was pleased with me. He put his arm around me and assured me that he was proud of me and that I pleased him. That meant so much to me! Yet now, 25 years later, I am still hearing more of his criticism and disapproval than his love.

God brought my thoughts back to the beginning of my life. Even before I was conceived, I was a wanted child. One of my favorite childhood photos is one with Heidi, my older sister, sitting on the grass, with me on my dad's shoulders. He did want me and he did love me. But because of his own upbringing, he had a difficult time showing it. So, naturally, as a child, I had a difficult time perceiving his love.


Was it any wonder that I had a hard time perceiving God's love for me? No, it was natural. Tears flowed as I let the realization of my earthly father's love wash over. Gradually, I was then able to realize my heavenly Father's love as well.

The realization was deep, the experience vivid. God's love for me is without condition and does not depend on my performance. He approves of me and is pleased with

me. That realization makes me want to please Him in everything I do.

But God's wasn't finished with His revelation to me yet. He brought to my mind a text and scripture song that I love and the words were also personalized for me. "The Lord, my God, in the midst of me is mighty, mighty. He will save, He will rejoice over me with joy, with joy. I will rest in His love, He will joy over me with singing. The Lord, my God, in the midst of me is mighty, mighty, mighty" (Zephaniah 3:17). God not only approves of me and is pleased with me, He delights over me, sings over me. Amazing!

My thoughts then were brought to my own husband, John. God gave me John who loves me so approvingly and so unconditionally. He blessed me with such a special gift in my life, a husband whose love is in contrast to what I experienced in my home. His love helped me to flourish and blossom and to come to realize the depth of my own father's love and God's love for me.

This realization is having a profound influence on my way of thinking. I have always been driven, doing, accomplishing, working . . . always trying to prove my worth and value to myself and to those around me. Now I can relax, slow down a bit, smell the roses, enjoy life, all because I have an increased awareness that I am valued and loved by my heavenly Father. Still, every day, I have to remember my life is His and yes, I want to please Him. But I know He already approves of me and is pleased with me and nothing I can do can improve on that! 

*Never live your life
according to what is right
for someone else.*

An "If" for Preachers' Kids

Virginia R. Kerr

If you can display perfect speech and manner
And still be able to ruff and tumble with your friends.

If you know when to be silent like a church mouse
And yet understand when silliness might offend.

If you can know when to demand your parent's attention
To your very important heartaches and your joys.

If you feel that most people love and accept you
And can relax and play like other girls and boys.

If you realize how to keep a confidence,
That there are secrets you must never tell,
But know that you don't need to bear all the burden,
That there will always be forgiveness when you fail.

If you can reach a happy balance between
What you are and what parents need for you to be,
Of what is expected by the entire congregation
And that which within yourselves you feel is "me."

If you can fill the position you've been thrust in
By happenstance of birth, rather than choice,
Close your ears to others' conflicting expectations,
Listen only to the instructions your parents voice.

If you can be a child-like young Jesus,
Learning wisdom at your dad and mother's knee,
You can then rest in this great assurance,
That you'll be all that God expects of you to be.

Virginia R. Kerr writes from Columbia, South Carolina.

When Tension Builds in the Pastoral Home

Priscilla C. Swank

Let's be honest. The pastor's family is not perfect. Where did we ever get the idea that it was or that it had to be?

Let's be honest on another point. The pastor's marriage is not perfect. No marriage on this spiritually fallen planet is perfect. Further, where did we ever get the idea that we had to portray to laity or other clergy that our marriages were perfect?

A quick reading of the first few chapters in Genesis inform us that we are damaged property. The snake and mortals' free wills saw to that from the start, unfortunately.

That damaged property includes marriage—for laypersons and parsonage families alike.

So what does the pastor's wife do when the marriage gets stressed out? Statistics are showing that increasingly the parsonage household needs help in this area. There is plenty of tension to go around, sadly.

I have been married to the same pastor husband for over forty years. We have been in ministry for thirty-seven of those years. So I look back over some of the attempts we have sincerely made to work against stress brought on by being in ministry. May I share some of them with you?

(1) *We both regard one another as equals in ministry.* That is, we are both open to discussion. We are both called upon to talk things out, speak

up, and work through life's situation. In other words, there is no one of the twosome regarded as "boss of the show."

My husband surely does have his share of opinions. And I do, too. We both submit then to one another, just as Paul wrote that husbands and wives were to do (Ephesians 5:21).

(2) *We splice matters into small pieces.* We have a tendency to analyze situations to the nth degree—this includes people, bureaucracies, programs, doctrine, money, decision-making and the like. There are not many generalities in our lives; there are myriads of specifics.

Much of our talking-things-out centers on trying to figure out the multi-dimensions of detail. Frequently, we do not agree in the "figuring out." That means that we may charge forth in two different, opposing directions, or pull back and try to reach a middle ground of common sense. The latter of course is the wiser of the two options; therefore, we are at our best when following that approach.

(3) *We both believe in the same Christian postulates.* That is, we are not at variance concerning the core beliefs. Our marriage was begun on common ground when it came to doctrine; we have maintained that base through the years. In that, we have found our especial strength of soul.

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Therefore, when tension does raise its complicated head, we do have a biblical faith to draw on. We have our prayer lives to back us up. We have our Scriptural promises to go to. We have our common worship milieu in which to immerse our spirits.

(4) *We take time out when stress really builds up.* There is nothing like “calling it quits” for a brief interim. There is no need to keep the merry-go-round spinning like a crazy top when logic and verbiage are spiraling out of control.

As in every marriage, communication can get tangled. Things are said that should have been left unsaid. That’s when we truly realize our damaged selves due to The Fall. It is not a pleasant moment. Consequently, maturity in marriage communication calls for verbal “time out.” After awhile, returning to conversation can reestablish a sane base for going on with life. Looking back on the stress stimulus usually yields an insignificant matter starting the heat to increase; in other words, frequently it was something not worth the tension build-up.

(5) *We try to point the frustration where it originates.* If it is a lay person making trouble in the congregation, then point to the troublemaker, not to your spouse. If it is a child who is unruly, then focus on dealing with that youngster and don’t blame the spouse.

We have become upset on occasion by outside influences; without realizing it, sometimes we “start in on one another” to release some floating frustration. Long ago we concluded that that was truly faulty thinking. Don’t let it happen to you. And in the ministry, there are plenty of outside stimuli to set off mini-volcanoes between pastor and his wife. When this occurs, stop it, get hold of reality, and recoup.

(6) *We learn from others who have*

dealt openly and honestly with tension in parsonage marriage. Some of the older couples are quite willing to share their insights. Some other couples, regardless of age, who have gone through particularly difficult life situations are gold mines for spiritual guidance when it comes to bringing peace to marital stress.

We have found a few confidants along life’s way with whom we can truly be ourselves—opening up our disagreements, asking for responses, working through detail in the light of others’ perspectives. Be careful, however; make certain that such confidants genuinely can be trusted for the long-haul.

(7) *We have refused to bring our children into the marital stress,* that is, by coaxing them to take sides with one parent or another. That does not mean that the children have not been privy to some of the tension; they have. But in that, they have grown to realize that we, their parents—though pastor and wife—are humans. We, like all people, have problems. And one of these days, our offspring will experience their own marital tensions.

Hopefully, in their realism, they will have learned from us, their parsonage parents, some techniques in how to heal hurts, communicate more wisely and refuse to give in to divorce or separation.

(8) *We have believed that God brought us together in marriage.* It was not our choice, but His. Therefore, God has been quite interested in this investment which He bonded many years ago. He is still quite concerned. And He always will be.

Consequently, we can go freely to God with our stress, unburdening to Him our secrets, worries and tangled experiences. He knows them already. He is more than loving toward us in the midst of our tension. He is not on one side or the other; He is on the side of both of us—and the

success of our marital vows continuing.

(9) *We have found the worship experience itself healing.* When we worship with those of like faith, we bring to God our tensions along with our praises. In that, we often come upon a divine insight to some tension that was needled us prior to worship.


After worshipping God in spirit and truth, God at times has erased the tension without us having to do much else. We know that this is His continuing grace poured out upon our consecrations.

(10) *We have learned how to forgive.* We have found forgiveness to be powerful in peace and hope. There is the peace for the moment and the hope for the future. This dual package is a boon in that it can carry one from now till then without being tempted to give up.

“I’m sorry” is a potent force. Use it. It works when spoken sincerely. Also, confessing that one is “human”—that is, damaged goods due to The Fall—does in fact put the biblical fact to the personal tension. It is a most down-to-earth application of who we are, why we act the way we do, and that God loves us anyway. If He does, then we surely should continue loving one another—foibles and all.

(11) *We have relied upon the divine mercy time and again.* Sometimes there are marital tensions which occur which only mercy can match.

Mercy is real. Mercy is everlasting. Mercy comes from the throne. Mercy is meant to be applied. Mercy is spelled out time and again in the Bible. We need to take the loving, heavenly mercy more to our life situations—especially as husbands and wives in ministry.

Mercy is God’s way of telling us that He still believes in us—in our marriages—in our ministries. Since He does, we should, too. 

Taking Time Out

Ermine Leader

Ermine and her pastor husband, Charles, have been married for 22 years. They have three daughters. Ermine has a Ph.D. in psychology. She is a registered psychologist and currently works at York University, Toronto. She also has a small private practice. A major part of her ministry is to listen to people share their struggles and help them sort out their options. She currently serves as Chair to the Toronto District School System. Ermine's interests include cooking, traveling and Pathfinderism. She presents workshops and seminars on matters pertaining to Family Life, Women's Ministries and Children's Ministries.



Several weeks ago, I had the distinct privilege of addressing the Shepherdesses during our annual Conference Workers' Meeting. I shared with them some of the challenges associated with being "pastors' wives" and some of the pitfalls we may encounter. Following are portions of that devotional.

It is my prayer that these thoughts will challenge us to renew our resolve to keep connected to the Source of our strength and to steer clear of anything that weighs us down as we prepare for our kingdom.

No matter where we come from or where we are headed in our lives, we fill multiple roles. We are wives, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, and sisters. For those who are married to pastors, our roles are expanded. Our work seems to double, even triple. We become chief planners, hostesses, pastor substitutes and chauffeurs. Of course, the list goes on!

Many of us scurry around each day trying to get all the activities squeezed into one day; we feel breathless at the day's end. Yes, we are exhausted. Some of us serve multiple churches and take on heavy responsibilities in our husbands' districts. We believe we have to make our husbands look good. We want everyone to know what effective leaders our husbands are. We do all this in addition to our other family-related responsibilities. Often, we

have so much to do, we do nothing very well.

Consequently, feelings of inadequacy set in and we begin a downward spiral that does us little spiritual, physical or emotional good. This is especially the case when others seem not to appreciate our efforts, or worse still, cast negative remarks about our performance. Too often, we become overwhelmed, too distracted to be good play partners to our spouses or fun for our children and others to be around.

As pastors' wives, do we hold the belief that if our husbands are unable to carry out tasks we must automatically fill in and do equally well? Do we fall into the practice of feeling obligated to accept offices because we are "the pastor's wife?" And when we somehow give in to the expressed or unspoken expectation that we must host every church related event, visit or call every church member who is ill or in some crises, continue to do our regular jobs and raise *perfect* children, are we somehow assuming that we have some special arrangement with God which makes us immune to stress, burnout, mental and physical breakdowns and marital unhappiness? If so, I believe we are setting ourselves up for much unhappiness, and in the long run, ill health. This kind of life stance has the potential to leave us empty and disconnected.

There are some of those among us who have realized that congregations can have conflicting, and even

*"The path to eternal life
is steep and rugged,
take no additional weights
to retard your progress."*

unreasonable expectations. Such expectations sometimes reach into the sacred circle of the home, threatening to destabilize it. We get into major trouble when we try to please everyone. We are trying to do the impossible!

It is far better for all concerned to set clear boundaries with our parishioners about what we can and will do. Once that is established, we must strive to do the best we can do at whatever job we undertake.

More importantly, we need to be clear about what God Himself wants us to do in every given situation. God's voice and leadings are often crowded out of our lives by our constantly busy schedules. A quick prayer here and there, now and then, does not constitute a walk with God. **Time** alone can accomplish that so I ask, when do you take time to find strength for the journey? Taking time out with God is the only way we can truly grow as His children.

What about Sabbaths? Do our children get a glimpse of what true Sabbath-keeping is about? Do they see our personal relationship with God? Or, do they see the endless routine of one meeting after another? Is Sabbath seen as a delight, a family affair? Keep close to the hearth, the promise of Isaiah 58: 13, 14.

Many of us need to slow down our gallop to be useful. This may involve reassessing our priorities. What is more important, the church or our homes? Do we fit everything else

(apart from our daily time with God) around our family lives, or do we attend to our families only if church and other responsibilities allow us time? This reassessment may mean giving up one or more church responsibilities. It may mean letting go of the expectations that others have of us that make our lives distressed rather than joyful in ministry. It may mean we have to reevaluate the belief that we *should always* be available to those outside our families.

Setting our priorities straight is a must if God is to have our attention, if peace and not confusion, is to reign in our hearts. *Messages to Young People*, page 135 says "The Lord never compels hurried complicated movements. Many gather to themselves burdens that the merciful Heavenly Father did not put on them. Duties He never designed for them to perform chase one another widely. God desires us to realize that we do not glorify His name when we take so many burdens that we are overtaxed, and, becoming heart-weary and brain-weary, chafe, and fret and scold. We are to bear only the responsibilities the Lord gives us, trusting in Him, and thus keeping our hearts pure and sweet and sympathetic."

As a teenager, my most rewarding summer activity was our senior youth camp in the North Carribean Conference. The daily "marching order" came from *Messages to Young People*, page 441. It is a favorite of mine. "The path to eternal life is steep and rugged, take no additional weights to retard your progress".

My prayer is that each of us will consider the journey of our conversion, and truly allow God to be our Guide and not to judge our usefulness by the number and weight of burdens we carry as we share our lives with our pastor husbands and others.

New Year

Anonymous

New Year's come
New Year's go
What did I accomplish?
What was my goal?

Did I reach out to someone
along life's busy way?
Did I help someone
have a better way?

Did I help lift someone's burden
when it was just too heavy to bear?
What were my accomplishments?
What were my goals achieved?

Did I help others find Him
who bore it all for me?
Did I share Jesus with them,
the One who died to set me free?

Have I made the world a better
place
by the things I've done or said?
Have I left a good impression
by the life that I have led?

Another year is over
another year begun
Will I live the same way
as in the year that's already done?

Or will I during this New Year
determined in my heart
that this year will be different
I'll give Jesus every part!

*This poem originally appeared in the
Arizona Shepherdess newsletter in
January 2003.*

Every Woman's Pantry

Patrice Gordon

Patrice Williams-Gordon is an instructor at Northern Caribbean University. She serves as president of Shepherdess in the Central Jamaica Conference, a responsibility she absolutely enjoys. Patrice is married to Pastor Danhugh Gordon and they have two daughters, Ashli and Rhondi.

Consumed with passion of nurturing relationships, Patrice always welcomes the opportunity to write and speak on the issues. She counts her family and friends as her greatest treasures.



There is one thing that every woman has—a pantry! Though they may vary in sophistication, make and style, be it a walk-in pantry or two shelves over a counter, it still is a pantry. Here she stores raw material to prepare food for herself and her family, thus ensuring that life is sustained.

However, every woman has an even more personal pantry—a pantry of friends—a collection of human influences, which ensures that her life is sustained. Some make the terrible mistake of expecting to have one all-purpose friend who meets their every need and in so doing destroys very good relationships with unrealistic expectations. The sooner women free themselves of the responsibility of being or finding that “one-true-friend,” life becomes more tasteful and fulfilling.

In every pantry there are some basic items including raising agents, spices, preservatives, sweeteners and of course the staples. You will find raising agents such as yeast, baking powder, baking soda, to name a few, and so it is in your friendship pantry. Every woman needs someone who, though their friendship may be applied in small doses, will give them the lift they need to go through life. Their influence, though dramatic, is not considered a staple product and is always used in small portions.

Do you have such a friend yet struggle with the guilt of not wanting to share on a consistent basis with him or her? Do you struggle with feeling that you have used such a friend? You may have felt insignificant in the life of a friend, only called on when he or she is down. Don't despair for that may be your small but indispensable, meaningful role in that relationship.

Yet another pantry item you dare not run out of is salt. Again, this item is used in small quantities and it blends in with other major components. The great part it plays in the finished product is often forgotten, and yet it is known to bring out otherwise hidden flavors.

Some friends are the salt in our lives; working in the background, they blend into our experience without much notice, but accentuate some of our finer qualities. Should we attempt to pull them out to the forefront or increase the quantity of their contribution to our lives, our experience may become distasteful and or as they say in Jamaica, *corned*.

Do not spoil a good relationship. Accept those friends or be that kind of friend to others, knowing that this too is an awesome role.

Then there is the ever-popular item, sugar. This sweetener is

naturally accepted and craved by almost everyone. It is exciting and can be depended on for a rush of energy. It can also be considered to be a preservative as seen in jams and jellies. Do any of your friends fit this role? They can be depended on to preserve your sanity with the sweetness of their humor and light heartedness. They make you laugh and always make obvious the bright side of life. Without them life would be drab and boring. This role is a popular and exciting one, usually accompanied with much recognition. Another attribute of these "sugar" friends, is the ability to inhibit the growth of despondency and negativism with their optimistic nature and keep you inspired and bubbly. However even this friendship if applied in excess can result in drunkenness and an unrealistic approach to life.

Finally, staple items like flour can be depended on for a wide cross section of preparation modes and uses; from binding agents in stews and gravies to a major component in cakes and pastries. It can be boiled, baked or fried. Even if sifted it always "comes through" for you. Staple friends are those who play a major role in defining your very existence. They are there through thick and thin and stick close when waters of disappointment and grief ravish your soul; they bind your very being together when you think you are about to fall apart. Note however, that on its own flour has no flavor and with a puff of wind may be blown away; similarly even "staple" friends have their intrinsic limitations.

Really, it takes all that is in your pantry to yield the truly beautiful experiences that go into making you uniquely special. Do not waste time trying to make or become an "all-purpose" friend; you could be at the losing end!



A Little Bit of Humor ...

A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again. Finally she spoke up.

"Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused. "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't He?"



*W*hile walking along the sidewalk in front of his church, our minister heard the intoning of a prayer that nearly made his collar wilt. Apparently, his five-year-old son and his playmates had found a dead robin. Feeling that a proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and cotton batting, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased. The minister's son was chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity intoned his version of what he thought his father always said: "Glory be unto the Faaaather. And unto the Soonnn . . . and into the hole he gooooooes."

With Exceeding Joy!



Lynelle Laws

May I recommend to pastors and parishioners alike the activity of camping. It is such a joy. All you need to take with you is one T-shirt and a pair of shorts. (Of course, keep in mind your clothes will get grotty and smoky and possibly threadbare.) Go to a deserted place where you will be privileged to sleep on the ground, eat food rolled in ashes, get bitten by everything that bites, and all the while, loving every minute of it—with exceeding joy!

I went on such an adventure last weekend with a similarly minded group of masochists called Path-


finders! And you know we not only enjoyed the whole camping bit (the grease in our hair, the toast dropped in ashes, the huge angry sandflies and yes, in Northern Australia, even the threat of crocodiles), we also grew to enjoy each other and our God.

Our small group, the kids, the leaders, my pastor husband, and I spent precious time together. We ran on the sandy beach as the brilliant blue of the water lapped our feet. We spent time in the hot harsh bush, walking and singing and we spent time resting in the shade. We drew a large circle on the sand and had "Sumo Wrestling" matches and we laughed and wrestled, ducked, and laughed some more. We played hockey in the dark with sticks and a tennis ball and we cackled as the stick swung aimlessly and we chuckled when we lost the ball to the blackness. We tried not to laugh at the impromptu concert that followed, but of course, sick jokes or not, our hearts were basking in contentedness and yes, laughter!

We spent time laughing and we also spent time with God. And I'm sure God laughed with us. For Sabbath School, we formed a chuckle chain. Each person had to lie on his back. Every second person had to lie

at a right angle with his head to the first person's stomach. The first person chuckled, then the second, and pretty soon, the entire line of kids was laughing so hard their heads were bobbing up and down as their stomachs heaved with laughter.

The leaders joined in laughter and our faces were alight with happiness and pride in our young people. And then I understood. It hit me as we closed off our Sabbath School with the following words, "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." As I listened I could picture the scene. When my Savior walks into God's presence in Heaven He is going to have the same smile of pride that I had had on my face all weekend. He will have the same chuckle that is so contagious on a Pathfinder camp well up inside Him. He will have the same twinkle in His eye and the same jubilant laughter in His throat that we have shared all weekend. My God will hold my hand and, bursting with exceeding joy, will say, "Father, this is my best friend. She has followed me and she's the coolest!"

A God who feels "exceeding joy"—I could go camping with a God like that, couldn't you? 

Lynelle Laws is a pastor's wife and new mother to Kayla, a one-year-old. She and her husband, Phil, minister in Queensland, Australia. She loves to help him in his work and use her writing skills to plan creative programs in their church worship.

A Farewell to Celia Cleveland



Celia Marie Abney Cleveland, born in Raleigh, N.C., June 14, 1921, to Pastor Benjamin and Celia Abney, went to her earthly rest, Thursday afternoon, May 29, 2003. Funeral services were held at the Oakwood College church in Huntsville, Alabama, on June 4.

Celia received her early education in Missouri, in English schools in Cape Town, South Africa, and at Oakwood Academy in Huntsville. She enrolled at Oakwood College in 1941 for two years and became a campus threesome with Elizabeth Mumford and Lorraine Davis Henri. Even then, Celia's knowledge and understanding of the Bible was known. Because of her father's influence and her own interest in reading the Bible, ministerial students would come to her for biblical information and affirmation.

The daughter of a pastor, evangelist, and missionary, Celia's world was extensive. The Abney's served in South Africa for eight years as the first Black missionary family. Her music ministry began when she was 11 years of age as a pianist in her dad's tent meetings. She served as a Bible instructor for a year in 1940

with Elder Herman R. Murphy, and when her husband, Edward Earl Cleveland, began his evangelistic career in 1943, Celia became his principal Bible instructor and pianist, and helped to lead more than 4,000 people to the church.

Celia and Earl were married May 29, 1943, in Meridian, Mississippi. Throughout their 60 years of marriage, Earl extolled his love for Celia to his listeners throughout the earth.

God blessed their union with a son, Earl Clifford, and four grandsons. Celia was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, and mother-in-law. She had unlimited love for each family member, and was cheerful, sympathetic, supportive, and generous. Celia had an amazing memory and could easily recall times, places, and dates of events, people's names, and birthdays of not only family members but friends too. She was her husband's memory bank.

Celia traveled to many nations with her husband as they conducted more than 60 evangelistic meetings with her at the piano.

For 11 years she served as secretary for the National Service Organization, supplying literature to soldiers in military service. She took a personal

interest in each soldier, memorizing many of their names and service units. Students attending the seminary in Washington, D.C., also found in her a mother away from home. She opened her home to them for relaxation, refreshments, and recreation.

Celia's friends around the world have benefited from her calm, pure, enduring Christian counsel, advice, and friendship. Many will remember her for her positive attitude about life and death, her cheerful disposition in pain and suffering. She knew and understood the promises of God, having read the Bible through a total of 45 times. Her relationship with God was secure. Her faith was unshakeable. Celia Cleveland earned the respect and adulation of all who knew her. Hers was a life that pointed to Jesus Christ, her Friend and Saviour.

She leaves to cherish her memory her husband, Edward Earl; her son, Earl Clifford; her daughters, Veda and Frieda; her grandsons, Edward Earl II, Omar Clifford, Matthew McCall, and Christian Tyler; her brother, Benjamin Abney; her brother-in-law, Harold Cleveland; her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Cleveland; her nieces and nephews and their children; and a host of friends. ☪

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and
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