

THE JOURNAL

A Shepherdess International Resource for Ministry Spouses

VOL. 28 – THIRD QUARTER 2011



BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US..

LESSONS ON LOSS: WHEN WE'RE
THE ONES HURTING

IT'S HAZARDOUS TO BE
A SHEPHERDESS!

NANCY WILSON: WILLING
TO GO WHEREVER
GOD LEADS

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The Journal: A Shepherdess International Resource for Ministry Spouses is a quarterly publication produced by Shepherdess International, an entity of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association.

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NANCY WILSON'S FAVORITE QUOTES

"In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings."

Conflict and Courage, Chapter 222

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him."

Conflict and Courage, Chapter 272

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet."

Ministry of Healing, p. 481

"He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. Whatever comes to him comes from the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Nothing can touch him except by the Lord's permission. All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, in short, all things work together for our good. All experiences and circumstances are God's workmen whereby good is brought to us."

Help in Daily Living, p. 31



One of my favorite joys is to encourage people to begin their day with God, and then to hear their testimony of what God does in them during that time. I've seen it over and over again – people who give God quality time every day have amazing stories to share!

My friend Carol* refused to get up early to spend time with God. She loved her sleep! So I started praying for God to wake her up early. “Kick her out of bed, Lord!” I often prayed. Then one day around 5 a.m., she heard a donkey braying. She had never seen or heard a donkey in her country neighborhood. After several mornings of the donkey braying, she realized God must be trying to get her up.

After several months of getting up early (yes, the donkey keep braying), Carol had a renewed love experience with God! Her church pastor asked her to share her testimony with the church family.

I arranged my schedule so I could be there. My heart rejoiced as I listened to Carol speak about her renewed love for Jesus. I was feeling pretty proud that I had been able help to her. As I was listening, God said to me, “Janet, you have lost your first love?” I was so shocked! “How can that be, Lord? I work for you all the time. I spend time with you every morning!” There was no response.

The next morning in my worship, I pled with God to explain it to me. He told me, “You used to love to spend time with me. Lately, you love your work more—your Prayer, Women’s, and Shepherdess ministries.” I said, “But I spend time with you every morning.” He responded, “Yes, but your heart is not here, you are thinking about your work and not about Me.” I was heartbroken and had to admit God was right.


Thankfully, with much prayer, God restored my “first love” experience with Him. What a wonderful, passionately-loving God! He so desires an intimate relationship with each one of us. “Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart” (Jer. 24:7).

Perhaps you’re wondering, “How do I have an intimate friendship with God?” For me, it was just sitting still with my Bible open and asking God to renew my “first love.” I would ask Him to show me

what to read, what to pray, how to sit still and let Him love me. He did the rest.

Spending quality time with God every day has helped me so much with my struggles of being a pastor’s wife. It has also allowed God to work in many other areas of my life, including raising my children.

Maybe you have lost your “first love” experience with God. It is easy to do. I am praying for you that God will restore it quickly! And I know He will!

I hope you take time to read this issue of *The Journal*. I think you will enjoy the interview with Nancy Wilson. Nancy is such a humble and loving person. You might identify with her struggles in being a pastor’s wife. And “Family Meals” is right on. I know it made a difference with our sons. Plus, there are several other good articles! Enjoy! 

* Not her real name



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JANET PAGE, General Conference ministerial associate for Shepherdess International and Prayer Ministries, is passionate about knowing Jesus, prayer, and reaching people for Him. As Prayer, Shepherdess, and Women’s Ministries coordinator for the Pennsylvania and Central California Conferences in North America, Janet has seen God work to change lives in miraculous ways when His people come together in prayer. Often a speaker for weekend retreats, she loves sharing her favorite subjects—Jesus and spending time with Him. She also travels with her husband Jerry, speaking at leadership events around the world. She has two sons, two daughters-in-law, and two young grandsons. You can contact her at pagejanet@gc.adventist.org.

BECAUSE HE LOVED US... 1ST

by Karen Holford

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Perhaps God's most important reason for giving us the gift of marriage was to give us a tangible way to experience His incredible love for us. All the love in the universe starts in God's heart. God is love, and all our love comes from Him. When we truly experience His love for us, we can truly learn what it means to love each other.

My husband and I work with couples, and we have noticed that the amount of love they experience in their human relationship is closely related to the amount of love each person experiences from God. So we have explored ways to help people experience more of God's love so that their marriages and families can be transformed.

Here are some ideas to help you experience more of God's love for yourself, which will allow you to share His love with your spouse.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE FOR YOURSELF

You are the most important channel of God's love into the life of your spouse or your child. What an awesome and wonderful responsibility! God wants to use *you* to show your family how much He loves each one of them! But first, He wants to show you how much He loves you. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NIV).

My love-line: Draw a timeline of your life. Along the line, describe the different times in your life when you especially experienced God's love. Perhaps someone cared for you in a generous and unexpected way. Maybe God answered your prayers in a way that touched your heart. Maybe

you read a scripture passage that helped you understand how much God loved you. Include as many examples as possible to build up a lifelong story of God's love for you.

Psalm study: Read Psalm 103 or 145 and list all the aspects of God's love that have been woven into these verses. Then match each aspect to an experience in your own life. For example, Psalm 103:8 speaks of God's patience, so think of a specific time when God was patient with you.

Absorbing God's love: Sit in a comfortable chair and wrap yourself in something that feels warm and comforting. Sit quietly and breathe slowly. As you inhale deeply, remind yourself how much God loves you. Then exhale slowly. If a thought pops into your head that challenges the idea that God loves you completely and deeply, say, "I know the truth, and the truth is that God loves me." Let the experience of God's love soak into your heart like sunshine on a summer's day. Imagine yourself all curled up in God's lap, your head on His chest, listening to His heart beating with love for you. Imagine Him gently stroking your hair until you feel soothed and at peace.

Love-journaling: Create a "God's Love Journal" and write down each time you notice any evidence of God's love for you. Write down at least three things each day. Reread this journal whenever you need a reminder of God's love.

Secret love plans: Do at least one thing—however small—each day to show God's love to someone else. As you think, pray, and carry out your special plan, your heart will come closer to God's loving



heart for the people around you, and you'll become more aware of His loving heart for you.

Love letter from God: Read “The Father’s Love Letter” (www.fathersloveletter.com), a beautiful letter from God to you, paraphrased from many different Bible verses and available in many languages. Read it as often as you can, focusing on one of the phrases that speaks to you of God’s love. Rewrite the letter, personalizing it with your spouse’s name, and give the letter to him or her to keep in the Bible.

WHENEVER YOUR HEART FEELS LOW ON LOVE, COME AND DRINK DEEPLY.

Love-hunt: Go through your home and gather a bowl of things that remind you of God’s love. I’ve collected dozens of hearts that remind me of different aspects of God’s love. I look at the hearts and choose the one that best expresses the kind of love I need from God at that moment. Sometimes I place that heart on my desk or in my purse to remind me of God’s love for me.

Discover what helps you to experience God’s love in the best way possible. Whenever your heart feels low on love, come and drink deeply, again and again, until your heart overflows with His love. When we’re topped up with God’s love, we’ll have plenty of love to share with others. When our hearts feel empty of love, we will often feel full of other

emotions—fear, hurt, anger, resentment, guilt, pain—which can easily spill out onto the people closest to us, preventing them from experiencing the fullness of God’s love in their own lives.

HELPING EACH OTHER EXPERIENCE MORE OF GOD’S LOVE

Explore 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Break down each phrase and reword it as a positive attribute (for example, “love keeps no record of wrongs” could be rewritten as “love is forgiving”). Then draw a line for each love quality, marking it on a scale of 1-10 (1 being very low in that quality and 10 being very high).

1	5	10

For example, rate your patience with your spouse on a scale of 1-10. Then think of what you can do to raise your patience score to the next number on the scale. Prayerfully ask God to help you be more patient with your spouse. Examine your own heart to uncover the attitudes, values, and misbeliefs you have that prevent you from being as patient as you want to be with your spouse. You could even say to your spouse, “I recognize that I’m not as patient as I’d like to be. I want to be more patient with you. Help me to understand the effect my impatience is having on you. Please forgive me for my impatience. Please pray for me that my patience will grow. And please help me to find ways to show my love for you through my growing patience.”

Love list. Make a list of 20 instances when your spouse helped you to feel especially loved. If this is difficult, ask God to bring these times back into your memory. When you have 20, look at them and see if there are any common threads. Was it a kind word, a helpful action, a thoughtful gift, a warm touch, or a special time together? Or was it when your spouse made you laugh, showed you respect, inspired you, comforted you, or encouraged you? Review your lists together so that you can each learn the best ways to show love to your spouse. Or make a list of three things that would help each of you to feel especially loved right now. Word these things as polite requests rather than complaints or nags, and give your spouse the freedom to choose how to fulfill your request. "I'd really feel loved if I came home one day and didn't have to make dinner." Or, "I'd feel especially loved if we could work together on tidying our garage."

Love letters. You might already be familiar with the ACTS model for prayer (A = Adoration, C = Confession, T = Thanksgiving, S = Supplication). This format can also be used to shape an encouraging love letter to your spouse:

A – Appreciate specific things your husband or wife has done or is doing. Praise your spouse for the way he or she has used wisdom, love, and spiritual gifts to bless you and other people. Tell your spouse how much you admire the way he or

she is parenting your children. It is important for us to be built up and encouraged by those who love us. Jesus praised Nathaniel for his faith and Mary for her act of pouring perfume on His feet.

C – Confess one or two specific things you have done that may have hurt your spouse or prevented him or her from experiencing the fullness of love from God and from you. Include at least one promise that you'll try to do something different that will help your spouse feel more of your love.

T – Thank your spouse for at least three specific times when he or she helped you to feel especially loved. When you know what helps each of you to feel especially loved, you may be encouraged to do it more often.

S – End with a short prayer of supplication, mentioning positive and specific prayer requests for your spouse. Ask God to bless your marriage and family, to enrich your spouse's personal relationship with God, and to bless his or her unique ministry and mission. Conclude by telling your spouse about something you love about him or her, and share a dream you have for your relationship.

Talk about God's love. Use some of the discussion starters below to help you talk more with your spouse about God's love:

- What does God's love look like to you?
- Which verses in the Bible best express God's love for you?
 - Describe three different times when you felt especially loved by God.
 - What do I do that helps you feel especially loved by God?
 - When are you most likely to feel low on God's love, and what can I do to help you feel topped up again?
 - What can we do together to help each other experience more of God's love? What difference might that make in our marriage?
 - Today I felt most loved by God when . . .

Finally, we can look at each other through God's loving eyes and ask ourselves, "I wonder how God wants to use me today to show His amazing love to my spouse?" The more we show God's love to our spouse, the more likely it is that we'll experience God's love through him or her, too.



KAREN HOLFORD is a family therapist and freelance writer living in Scotland, where her husband, Bernie, is the president of the Scottish Mission. Together they have been exploring what God's love means in their own lives, in their marriage, in their family, in their church, and in their community. It's an endless and wondrous journey of discovery that they hope will last for eternity.

FAMILY MEALS



Do you remember the days when families gathered around the table to eat their meals? What happened? As we have become more modernized, mechanized, and galvanized, some traditions have fallen by the wayside. The family meal appears to have become one of these lost rituals.

Is family mealtime important? Why?

In the following article, four research authors explore this timely topic, and you will be surprised at what they have to report. With my special thanks to all of them for their willingness to share their findings, let me introduce these individuals to you:

- Gary L. Hopkins, MD, D.Ph., is a research professor in the Department of Behavioral Science at Andrews University and the associate director of the Department of Health Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Duane McBride, Ph.D., is a professor and Chair of the Department of Behavioral Science and executive director of the Institute for Prevention of Addictions at Andrews University.
- Shelley Bacon, MA, is the distance learning coordinator for AdventistLIVE in the Upper Columbia Conference.
- Maud Celestin is working on her Master's degree in Public Health at Loma Linda University.

—Rae Cooper

“My teenager isn't engaged in our family anymore. What can I do?” “How can I protect my children from the risky behaviors all around them?” “My son never listens to me. He's always using some sort of technology and tunes me out.” Parents, grandparents, and concerned adults face these issues every day.

While there is no cure-all for anything in life, there is a powerful, proven tool for working with kids that is simple, inexpensive, and readily available. You can connect with your kids, help make them healthier, improve their test scores, reduce the chance for risky behavior, and grow their faith by using this simple tip: Eat family meals together!

Mealtime is not just an event where food is prepared and consumed; it is also a time to talk and interact. Discussion on a broad range of topics can lead to interactions that have the potential to develop quality relationships within the family. For these interactions to be of high quality, distractions must be eliminated. Turn off your television and cell phones and focus solely on your kids and extended family. Here are some good reasons for making the move toward meaningful family meals.

FAMILY MEALS CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR COMBATING OBESITY

One study conducted on youngsters reported that kids who watched television during meals ate fewer vegetables, calcium-rich foods, and grains; they also



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drank more soft drinks than did adolescents who didn't watch television during meals. Researchers concluded that family meals during adolescence may have a lasting positive influence on dietary quality and meal patterns in young adulthood.¹

"The family meal setting has the potential to substantially impact the dietary intake of children and may provide an important avenue for obesity prevention. However, opportunities for families to have meals together have been negatively affected by changes in our society, and data suggest that the frequency of family meals may be declining."² One such change that affects childhood obesity is the ready and quick access to "fast foods." Whoever is responsible for buying groceries needs to avoid bringing home fast foods to be eaten during family mealtime. Research has reported that fast foods tend to have frequent servings of chips and soda, both of which are associated with obesity among adolescents.³ Obesity is a real problem for families in the developed world, so we must do everything we can to avoid foods associated with excessive weight gain.

In research among kids attending alternative schools, students who reported never eating family meals were more likely to be overweight, to eat fewer fruits and infrequent breakfasts, and to be more depressed.⁴

There is clearly much scientific data available that corroborates that family meals are associated with more healthful meals and, therefore, less obesity. Think about it: obesity is a severe problem, and eating family meals is one simple strategy that can have a beneficial effect in preventing it.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Because many family schedules are jam-packed with activity, we should do all we can do to ensure that our kids enjoy academic success. Can eating meals together help in this area too?

A program called Project EAT explored the association between the frequency of family meals and the psychosocial well-being of adolescent boys and girls.⁵ Data analysis from this research showed that having frequent family meals was associated with higher academic performance. Another study reported similar findings; teens in that study who reported eating with their families were more likely to have higher grades in school and to go to college.⁶

Barbara Mayfield of Purdue University would agree that family meals improve students' grades. She reported that "a *Reader's Digest* survey of more than 2,000 high-

school seniors compared academic achievement with family characteristics. Eating meals with their family was a stronger predictor of academic success than whether they lived with one or both parents."⁷

Without a doubt, we all want our children to succeed. Doing something as simple as eating meals together has been shown to improve test scores and grades, even when the family situation, though divorce or separation, is less than ideal.

FAMILY MEALS AND HIGH-RISK ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORS

The issue of risky behaviors is global. In all societies and cultures, kids face huge behavioral and emotional risks with potentially severe health consequences. Parents are in almost universal agreement: they want to keep their kids away from these dangers. Family meals can assist them in this area, too.

TEENS WHO HAVE MEALS WITH THEIR FAMILIES ARE ALSO LESS LIKELY TO HAVE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR MAKE SUICIDAL ATTEMPTS, AND THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL.

More than 50 percent of teens who do not eat dinner with their parents have sex by the age of 15 to 16. This rate decreased to 32 percent when there were family meals in the home. Teens who have meals with their families are also less likely to have suicidal thoughts or make suicidal attempts, and they are less likely to be suspended from school.⁸ The issue of teen suicide is particularly important in areas where it is problematic, such as Australia and New Zealand.

Research has reported that family meals are associated with fewer instances of substance abuse. One study reported that the frequency of family meals was associated with less substance use along with less theft and reduced interest in gang membership.⁹ Another study with similar findings reported that family meals were associated with a lower likelihood of tobacco and alcohol use.¹⁰ Parents should be encouraged by these findings because they point out that there are indeed things they can do to protect kids from risk.



We can all benefit from learning how to talk to our kids, especially at mealtime. “This year’s CASA study [from Columbia University] demonstrates that the magic that happens at family dinners isn’t because of the food on the table; it’s because of the conversations around it. Family dinners relate to family bonding, which relates to significantly higher rates of pro-social behavior and lower rates of all types of risk behavior.”¹¹

FAITH AT THE TABLE


From an early age, children begin to form their image of God from their experiences and relationships with parents and other significant adults in their lives. They observe and are affected by how these adults live out their relationship with God. Marjorie Thompson says that “the way we relate to each other is the most important spiritual discipline in the life of a family.”¹¹ Research by the Search Institute confirms that the most significant religious influence on children is not what happens at church but what happens at home.¹²

Eating together provides a time for bonding, discussion, and faith talk. Deuteronomy 6 says that if we want to share our faith, we will be more intentional and deliberate about creating rhythms in our homes and talking about our faith. The simple event of sitting at home having a meal together becomes an important opportunity for beliefs and values to be both developed and practiced.

EAT WITH YOUR KIDS!

Improving health, getting better grades, reducing the chances of failure through risky behaviors, building faith—it is clear that the simple act of eating with your children will make a difference in their lives. Here is a list of practical suggestions for making family mealtime important and effective:

- Aim to have at least 5-6 meals a week as a family.
- Make mealtime extra-special. Meals are a wonderful opportunity to show your children how important they are. Try these ideas:
 - Turn off distracting technology (cell phones, home phone).
 - Remove computers, TVs, MP3 players, etc., from the vicinity of the dinner table.

- Keep conversations positive, pleasurable, and non-judgmental.
- Discuss your children’s day and share yours.
- Ask questions that stimulate faith and beliefs. Encourage everyone to take part. 

¹ Shira Feldman, Marla E. Eisenberg, Diane Neumark-Sztainer, and Mary Story, “Associations between Watching TV during Family Meals and Dietary Intake Among Adolescents,” in *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 39, no. 5 (Sept/Oct. 2010): 257-263.

² Jayne A. Fulkerson, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Peter J. Hannan, and Mary Story, “Family Meal Frequency and Weight Status Among Adolescents: Cross-Sectional and 5-Year Longitudinal Associations,” in *Obesity*, 16, no. 11 (August 2008): 2529.

³ Kerri N. Boutelle, Jayne A. Fulkerson, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Mary Story, and Simone A French, “Fast Food for Family Meals: Relationships with Parent and Adolescent Food Intake, Home Food Availability and Weight Status,” in *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 35, no. 1 (January 2007): 24-29.

⁴ Jayne A. Fulkerson, Martha Y. Kubik, Mary Story, Leslie Lytle, and Chrisa Arcan, “Are There Nutritional and Other Benefits Associated with Family Meals Among At-Risk Youth?” in *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 45, no. 4 (October 2009): 389-395.

⁵ Marla E. Eisenberg, Rachel E. Olson, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Mary Story, and Linda H. Bearinger, “Correlations Between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-Being Among Adolescents,” in *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 158, no. 8 (August 2004): 792-796.

⁶ Council of Economic Advisors, “Teens and Their Parents in the 21st Century: An Examination of the Trends in Teen Behavior and the Role of Parental Involvement, 2000.” Accessed 18 November 2010: available from http://clinton3.nara.gov/WH/EOP/CEA/html/Teens_Paper_Final.pdf. Internet.

⁷ Barbara J. Mayfield, “Family Meals Fact Sheet.” Accessed 18 November 2010: available from <http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/HumanServices/PublicHealth/SchoolHealth/file65896.pdf>.

⁸ Bisakha Sen, “The Relationship between Frequency of Family Dinner and Adolescent Problem Behaviors after Adjusting for Other Family Characteristics,” in *Journal of Adolescence*, 33, no. 1 (February 2010): 187-196.

⁹ James White and Emma Halliwell, “Alcohol and Tobacco Use During Adolescence: The Importance of the Family Mealtime Environment,” in *Journal of Health Psychology*, 15, no. 4, (May 2010): 526-532.

¹⁰ CASA: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, “The Importance of Family Dinners IV.” 22 September 2010. Accessed 18 November 2010: available from <http://www.casacolumbia.org/templates/PressReleases.aspx?articleid=606&zoned=79>. Internet.

¹¹ Thompson, *Family: The Forming Centre*, 59.

¹² Search Institute, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. 1990.

IT'S HAZARDOUS TO BE A SHEPHERDESS!

by Sally Lam-Phoon



It was summer vacation; Nita had returned home for a short break to spend time with her parents and grandparents. She had just completed her third year of college. The year had been a challenging one, not in terms of studies as she was a straight-A student but in terms of her relationship with her boyfriend who had chosen to prepare for ministry.

Questions plagued her about her future with this young man. Would she be secure—emotionally and financially? Would she be able to take the stress and strain of parish life, of living in a fish bowl? Would she be able to grow in her own career? In short, would she be a good Shepherdess beside her future minister-husband?

Her grandmother had the wisdom to read her thoughts. She said, “Nita, I have no doubts about your steady boyfriend being a fine, young man except one thing.” Eager to learn from her grandma’s wisdom, Nita was all ears. “What is that one thing?”

“He will be a pastor soon and will not be able to give you a good life. A pastor struggles with financial problems; you will feel most insecure. How will he be able to provide for the children who will come along?”

While Nita smiled and said nothing in return, she wondered if God was waking her up to reality. Was Grandma right? Should she walk away from the relationship now before it was too late?

Being a Shepherdess is hazardous! Grandma had only part of the picture! Being a Taoist, she didn’t understand church politics and how cutting and cruel people can be even within the loving circle of church fellowship.

Being a Shepherdess is hazardous! Grandma didn’t know the constant need to go wherever the mission/conference dictates. Many pastors have moved more than 20 times in 30 years of ministry.

Yes, being a Shepherdess is hazardous! Grandma didn’t understand how pastoral families struggle with helping their children adjust to a new environment, new friends, or a new school. But above all, Grandma didn’t understand the power behind a great God who can supply every need, who knows exactly what is best for us, who has our best interests at heart every time and all the time, who will help us grow and learn, who will accomplish in us far beyond what we can ever think or hope or imagine possible.

Yes, being a Shepherdess is hazardous business, but we can allow our loving heavenly Father to shape us, groom us, and direct us. Whenever in our humanness we turn to worry, then it’s time to pour out our hearts to Him in thanksgiving, and yes, even complaining, and making our requests known to Him.

Even in the most hurtful moment, He is there beside us to comfort, guide, and, more impor-



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tantly, to grow us until we become more like Him. It is possible with every trial to come away a little stronger, a little wiser, a little more Christlike, a little more understanding of human nature and the spiritual struggle that wages war within each of us.

Yes, being a Shepherdess is hazardous business, but if we place our all on the altar of sacrifice, believing fully in His power and might, in His love and steadfastness, in His every promise to be there for us, we can bear the fruit of the Spirit—that one perfect fruit made up of seven components—love, joy, peace, faithfulness, patience, goodness, and self-control.

Yes, even though being a Shepherdess is hazardous business, one which I've been in for more than 34 years, as I look back and reflect, I have no regrets. The road has not been smooth, but God has prepared the way before me. I have grown beyond my wildest dreams; my children have been blessed abundantly. God was and still is always there, holding my hand and assuring me that this hazardous business of being a Shepherdess will one day lead to glorious life eternal.

He has fulfilled what He has promised me—that if His joy is in me, my joy will be complete (John 15:11). Through this hazardous business, I can only proclaim, “What amazing grace! What a wonderful God!”



SALLY LAM-PHOON has been a Shepherdess for 40 years, working in partnership with her husband in church work at the mission and union levels. For 20 years, they served students and faculty as teachers and later administrators. Currently, they are working together in Family Ministries at the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. Sally also oversees the work of Children's and Women's Ministries and a unique leadership program in NSD called CLAP (Communication and Leadership Advancement Program).



NANCY WILSON: WILLING TO GO WHEREVER GOD LEADS

by Gina Wahlen



Ted Wilson and Nancy Vollmer were engaged in 1975

to the car, she asked, ‘Shall we invite him to Sabbath dinner or would that be too much?’” As the two debated, Ted was standing by his car some distance away, hoping for an invitation that didn’t come. “I was afraid that it might be too obvious,” Nancy recalled. “I was determined to never chase a guy.” A few weeks later Nancy’s phone rang. It was Ted, wondering if she would like to go out to lunch at Nena’s, an authentic Mexican restaurant in San Bernardino.

A GROWING ATTRACTION

The following weekend, Nancy went up to Northern California to help her grandparents. Her grandfather had fallen while visiting PUC and was scheduled for surgery. Staying at the home of friends in St. Helena, not far from PUC, Nancy was surprised on Friday evening when the phone rang and the call was for her. It was Ted. “Somehow he tracked me down . . . I don’t know how he did it,” Nancy recalls. “He said that he was driving up from Loma

Nancy Wilson never saw herself as a pastor’s wife—and was sure that she would never marry a minister. “I was going to marry someone and go back home to Asheville [North Carolina], and spend the rest of my life there,” remembers Nancy. “But God had other plans.”

And so did Nancy’s grandmother. In 1974 Nancy Vollmer was working as a physical therapist at Loma Linda University Medical Center in California. She usually attended the Campus Hill Church, but this particular Sabbath she decided to attend the University church with her grandmother.

Soon after Nancy and her grandmother found a seat in the large church, a young man accompanying an elderly woman sat down on the other side of the pew. Poking Nancy, her grandma said, “That’s Teddy Wilson. Stick with me and I’ll introduce you after church.”

Ted Wilson was just completing a Master of Science in Public

Health at Loma Linda and would soon be moving to Long Island, New York, to begin pastoring.

After the service, Grandma Vollmer introduced Ted and Nancy, and the two talked for a long time in the church foyer. “We had both parked in the same parking lot,” remembers Nancy, “and as Grandma and I were walking

Linda on Sunday morning and that if I stayed in St. Helena we could enjoy Sunday evening together and I could fly back early Monday morning in time for work, so I decided to stay.” Ted was actually on his way to New York to begin his ministry and made this special detour just to see Nancy.

Ted took Nancy to the San Francisco airport early Monday morning to catch a flight south. They talked non-stop all the way to the airport.

As she boarded the plane, Nancy was in for a surprise—there in the seat next to hers sat a familiar person—someone that she had previously had an interest in. “However,” said Nancy, “after spending time with Ted, I



Ted and Nancy with their grandparents



Ted and Nancy Wilson on their wedding day on September 14, 1975



The happy couple after their wedding in Asheville, North Carolina

had *NO* interest in the other guy!” As Ted drove across the country, he enjoyed munching on special sweet and salty crackers Nancy and her grandmother had made for him.

DOWN THE WEDDING PATH

That was the beginning of a long-distance romance. In January of 1975 Nancy moved from Loma Linda to Reading, Pennsylvania where she worked at Reading Rehab—only a four-hour drive from Ted’s church on Long Island, New York. As the Memorial Day weekend approached at the end of May 1975, Ted and Nancy decided to travel to North Carolina where he could meet Nancy’s parents. Unbeknownst to them, two of their grandmothers were fasting and praying over 2,000 miles away in California, asking the Lord to lead and bless the relationship of their grandchildren. So it was not a surprise to the Wilson and Vollmer grandparents when, on June 1, 1975, Ted

and Nancy called to tell them of their engagement.

IN THE FISHBOWL

Following their wedding on September 14, 1975, in Asheville, the couple moved to Long Island, where Ted was pastoring the Adventist church in Patchogue. “All of a sudden, I was in a fishbowl,” recalls Nancy. “Everybody was watching me, and I thought I had to be a certain way because I was the pastor’s wife. That made me very uncomfortable.”

After three months, Nancy realized, “All the Lord wanted was for me to be me, and for me to love the people. I couldn’t be anyone else.”

Once Nancy realized this, everything else fell into place. On Friday nights, the Wilsons hosted young people in their home. At that time, Nancy knew how to bake, but cooking was another thing, so every Sabbath lunch they would serve the same meal—lentil tostadas—but to different

guests. During the week Nancy enjoyed being at her husband's side, visiting church members, giving Bible studies, participating in prayer meetings, and (eventually) presenting cooking schools.

Leaving the Patchogue church was difficult. "I just loved the people. It was the kind of church where you could see the unity that came with the message . . . the group was made up of all kinds of people, and it was wonderful to see how they all came together as this little family. When they had our farewell, I just cried. I hated to leave. I loved being a part of Ted's work."

MOVING ON

Nancy and Ted moved to Rockland County, just north of New York City, where Ted worked with Metropolitan Ministries and Nancy worked as a physical therapist. It was during this time that their first two children were born—Emilie in 1978, and Elizabeth in 1980. It was also where they received their first call to serve as missionaries.

Not long after they were married, Ted had brought up the subject of mission service with Nancy, but she had just started crying. "You don't understand.

I AM PROOF THAT
AS LONG AS YOUR
ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO
DO GOD'S WILL, EVEN
THOUGH YOU THINK
YOU COULDN'T DO IT
OR WOULDN'T DO IT,
THE LORD WILL GIVE
YOU THE HEART TO
DO HIS WILL.



Ted and Nancy with their daughters Emilie Elizabeth, and Catherine when they were serving as missionaries in Abidjan, Ivory Coast

I'm so close to my family, I could never live that far away," she had told him.

But five years later, Nancy was willing to go. Reflecting on that experience, she said, "Even if you think you can't do something, I am proof that as long as your ultimate goal is to do God's will, the Lord will give you the heart to do it. Just pray, 'Lord, I want to do Your will; show me what it is and give me the strength to do it.'"

FROM AFRICA TO AMERICA

Soon, the Wilson family was in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, where Ted served from 1981 to 1990 at what was then known as the Africa-Indian Ocean Division. During this time, Ted and Nancy had a third child—Catherine, who was born in 1983. "It was a great place for kids," Nancy recalled, and after spending nine years in Africa, when a call came to return to the U.S. where Ted would serve as an associate secretary at the General Conference, the family was reluctant to leave. The move was particularly difficult for their eldest, Emilie, who had just turned 12 and had not lived in the U.S. since she was 3. Hoping to help ease the transition, Ted and Nan-

cy brought Emilie with them to Maryland to help search for a new home, while the two younger children stayed with grandparents.

MOVING ON . . . AGAIN

The Wilsons were pleased to find an affordable yet comfortable house in the country where the girls could feel at home. Just two years later, a call came again—this time to Russia.

Nancy was shocked. "I thought, no way. This could *not* be God's will. But I prayed, 'Lord, if it is your will, make it plain. We just want to do your will.' I was just so upset, not wanting to go but wanting to do God's will."

In two weeks Nancy lost eight pounds, not being able to eat or sleep well as she wrestled with God. "I've always felt strongly about bringing kids up in a rural environment," she reasoned.

"One day I was standing at the kitchen sink, looking out the back window while I was praying, 'Lord, you provided this country setting. How can it be your will to leave this and live in the city of Moscow?' Immediately, He answered me: "Is living in the country your god? Is this more important to you than following Me?' I



During the 1990s the Wilson family served in Moscow, Russia, where Ted was president of the ESD.

was shocked. I learned that you can think some things are absolutes, and they're not."

Knowing how difficult the transition from Africa to the U.S. had been for their family, especially for Emilie, who was now 14, Ted and Nancy were concerned about how accepting this call would impact their children.

"Ted and I talked about it. We knew our kids needed us, and we felt strongly that we needed to be with our kids. We told each other that if Emilie was adamant against leaving, we would have to turn down the call. We prayed and prayed and waited on the Lord to lead."

One Friday night, Nancy quietly slipped into Emilie's bedroom. Her lights were out but she was still awake. As Nancy sat down, she asked her eldest daughter, "Emilie, how do you really feel?" Emilie was quiet for a while, and then answered, "With all the people needing help, it seems a small thing for us to be inconvenienced."

HOW CAN YOU SAY NO TO GOD?

The next day at church, Nancy again felt the Lord gently calling

her. Elder Jan Paulsen was the speaker that day. "I remember sitting in the congregation, listening to him talking about how no one had any excuse for sleeping and not realizing that the end of time was near," recalled Nancy. "It was like, if God calls, how can you say no? I remember the tears started running down my face, and I knew what our answer would be."

The Wilsons moved to Russia in 1993, where Ted served as president of the Euro-Asia Division in Moscow. Nancy was de-

I THOUGHT, NO WAY. THIS COULD NOT BE GOD'S WILL. BUT I PRAYED, "LORD, IF IT IS YOUR WILL, MAKE IT PLAIN. WE WANT TO DO YOUR WILL." I WAS SO UPSET, NOT WANTING TO GO BUT WANTING TO DO GOD'S WILL.

lighted with "the wonderful place God provided for us to live—near the forest."

However, the early 1990s was a time of turbulence in Russia, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and a new form of government just beginning. That October, there was an attempted coup in Moscow. Nancy remembers, "Ted was in India for Annual Council, and I was alone with the girls. You could see the smoke and hear the tanks. It was a very tense time. I remember putting together our passports and everything we needed in case we had to leave in a hurry."

And yet in spite of various challenges, Nancy believes that "the time we had in Moscow was the most precious experience of our lives together—we were face-to-face with the great controversy every day. It was survival every day. We were aware that it wasn't the big metal door keeping us safe—it was the angels and God with us, and that He was the only one getting us through."

In 1996, the Wilson family returned to Maryland, where Ted served as president of the Review & Herald Publishing Association for the next four years, and then as a General Vice President at the General Conference for 10 years. Nancy returned to her work as a physical therapist—working part-time in order to be with their girls, who were quickly growing up. By 2010, all three daughters had finished their education, were married, and had children of their own.

LOOKING AHEAD

When the Wilson family got together for Christmas 2009, Ted and Nancy told the girls (and their families) that it might be the last time that they would celebrate Christmas together in Maryland because they didn't know what changes might take



place at the upcoming General Conference Session in Atlanta. “We didn’t know what might happen and realized that we could be sent anywhere in the world,” said Nancy.

THE CALL

On Friday, June 25, 2010, Nancy was in a hotel room near the convention center in Atlanta with her daughters, Catherine and Emilie, and son-in-law Kameron DeVasher when the phone rang. It was Ted with the news that he had just been invited to be the next General Conference president.

Nancy remembers the call vividly: “I’ve never heard him sound so sober. I started crying. I felt just like when the call came to go to Russia—not wanting to go but wanting to do God’s will.” Trembling, Nancy went over to the convention center, knowing that a new chapter in their ministry had begun.

PASTORAL WORK AGAIN

As Nancy looked over the sea of faces that greeted her as she and Ted walked onto the stage at the Georgia Dome, she fought back tears as she realized the

sobering, overwhelming responsibility that would be theirs.

In a sense, the two are working together again as a pastoral couple. Just as she did visitation with Ted when he was a pastor in New York, Nancy now travels with him as much as she can, visiting with various church members around the globe.

“At first I did not realize how important it would be to travel with Ted, but what I am noticing is that I am able to reach out to people, and they will open up to me. Sometimes the men will come up to me and say, ‘Thank

you so much for talking with my wife.’ Many people feel isolated, and I am happy to be able to visit with them—this is kind of like having a church again.”

When at home, the Wilsons still enjoy having people over, and they periodically host evening worship and socials around the campfire on their rural property.

In addition to the positives, from time to time Nancy has also noticed some of the negatives of being church leaders—such as being on the receiving end of rumors and criticisms.

“Some of the things we hear are just so laughable, you wonder who came up with them,” smiled Nancy. Like the rumor that Ted closed down Starbucks at the convention center in Atlanta as soon as he was elected GC president. “But he had nothing to do with it closing. It had been set in the contract nine years earlier that Starbucks would close when the GC Session officially began.”

Nancy has a very practical, spiritual approach when it comes to taking criticism: “I think the human side of us wants to respond with our fighting gloves on, but that’s not God’s way. Sometimes the people who criticize us the most, if we reach out to them, become our most loyal friends. Often there is a lack of understanding or some issue that causes them to be critical, but if you reach out to them in a loving way, sometimes that can dissolve. But,” she admits, “it can be very hard to do.”

TAKING TIME FOR FAMILY

Even though they now have many new responsibilities, Nancy and Ted still try to carve out some family time together—mainly outdoors, hiking or biking together. In the wintertime, when their children and families come home for Christmas, “we enjoy being together so much,” said

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The Wilson family (back row, left to right): David Wright, Elizabeth Wright, Ted Wilson, Nancy Wilson, Catherine Renck, Robert Renck, Jr., Emilie DeVasher, Kameron DeVasher. (front row, left to right): Matthew Wright, Lauren Wright, Henry DeVasher, Charlotte Rose Renck.

Nancy. “We just sit around and talk and talk and talk.” When alone, Nancy loves gardening and reading—“devotional and history books, biographies, books that I can learn from.”

REFLECTING ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING A PASTORAL SPOUSE

Nancy does not underestimate the influence of a wife upon a husband. “I don’t think anyone has more influence on our spouses than we do. Whether your husband is a pastor or an administrator—he faces a lot of pressure. And the easiest way to pull our husbands down is for the devil to use us.”

Opening her heart to pastoral spouses around the world, Nancy shares, “The most important thing as wives of pastors and administrators is for us to maintain an intimate walk with the Lord every day, to spend time with Him, to develop an ear to hear that ‘still, small voice’ that will direct us through the day so that

we will not only live our lives the way God wants us to, but that we will have a positive influence on our husbands. If we can stay positive and open to the Lord’s leading, it will, in turn, affect our ministry together.”

Looking back over their many years together, Nancy smiles and adds, “Never in my wildest imagination did I know that I would have the experiences I

have had. Many times I have gone kicking and screaming, but I knew it was God’s will to go. He always knows best, and He always has a good reason.”



GINA WAHLEN writes from Silver Spring, Maryland. She and her husband, Clinton, have one son, Daniel (19), and one daughter, Heather (14).

WHERE ARE THE WILSON DAUGHTERS NOW?

The Wilson’s eldest daughter, Emilie, is a nurse but is currently stay-at-home mom to little 9-month-old son, Henry. She is married to Kameron DeVasher, a pastor in Avon Park, Florida.

Their second daughter, Elizabeth, is also a nurse and stay-at-home mom to their three little ones: Lauren, 4, Matthew, 2, and Maryanne, who was born April 1, 2011. Elizabeth is married to David Wright, a pastor in north Georgia.

Catherine, their youngest daughter, is a physical therapist and stay-at-home mom to 8-month-old daughter, Charlotte Rose. She is married to Robert Renck, Jr., a dentist in Hagerstown, Maryland.



LESSONS ON LOSS: WHEN WE'RE THE ONES HURTING

by Sarah K. Asaftei

THE JOURNAL
18
THIRD QUARTER 2011

Last quarter, I wrote about grief, about our calling as pastors' wives to push past our own insecurities and find ways to truly "share each other's griefs" and "bear each other's sorrows" when someone in our sphere of influence is hurting. But what about when we are the grieving ones? What about when suffering and tragedy strike us personally? What are we supposed to do then?

Do we keep it secret? Should we keep a happy face when we're around others so they don't know we're hurting, can't pray for us, and certainly can't offer to help? And then do we wonder why we feel that people don't care or resent that nobody ever returns the act of sharing *our* burdens? Do we hang it out there for everyone to see? Should we sob out our disillusionment on the shoulder of every church member, friend, and passersby who will listen? Letting everyone know every detail of every little hurt or grief can backfire badly—we all know that.

Or maybe we share a little and stuff the rest away? Should we pretend that we're stronger than the pain? Should we keep working and ministering and serving and acting like everything is normal? This may seem like a good solution until all the junk hidden under the surface bubbles up and spills over at some inopportune moment.

So how should we deal with tragedy, turmoil, and suffering in the pastoral home? A review of Jesus' example can give us some pointers.

First of all, we take it to God. When Jesus was worn out, depleted, and facing the greatest trials

and agonies of His human life, He always went away to pray (Mark 1:35; 14:32; Luke 5:16; 6:12). He sought solitude and privacy so that He could unburden His heart to His Father before sharing with any other human being.

Second, He kept a circle of close friends who built Him up and replenished His soul with fellowship and kindness (and good food!). All four gospels mention His trips to Bethany, where He relaxed with His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. It was a safe place where He could escape the pressures of ministry and enjoy the fellowship of people who understood Him.

These are good ideas for today's pastoral families, too. It is wise to share our hearts with God in prayer before we spill our guts to others in conversation. And it is smart to surround ourselves with a few quality friendships—perhaps even separate from our immediate colleagues—where we can trust the relationship and have social interaction outside of ministry.

But then there are times when things happen that are overwhelming—terminal illness strikes, marriages crumble, sudden tragedy upends our reality—and we need more support than just some good friendships.

When horrifying things happen, we need to give ourselves the freedom (and the time) to grieve. If we spend all our energy keeping it "pulled together" and continue serving at the same pace we always have, we are almost guaranteed to break down sooner than later.



If we neglect the agonizing process of dealing with our personal griefs and tragedies in a healthy way, our ability to minister and serve others will be compromised. We cannot effectively guide, counsel, or mentor those around us when we have unresolved issues in our own lives. Sorrows that have never been properly grieved are likely to influence our judgment and subtly impair our ability to clearly discern leadership issues.

While we may cognitively know that a life of ministry comes with no guarantee of bliss, we may still find it hard to accept that tragic things can happen even when we have given our entire identities to serving God and meeting the needs of others. It can feel unfair and unjust and may bring overwhelming disillusionment or even depression. Disillusionment can bring bitterness, and depression can bring lethargy; neither are positive emotional states for a healthy spiritual leader.

As a member of a pastoral family, I believe that no matter our culture or personality, we have an obligation to the people we serve to seek help when we are hurting. If we are too proud, too private, or too personally withdrawn to submit to counseling or seek professional help, we are effectively placing ourselves above our divine calling to ministry.

This process of seeking help won't be the same for everyone. Some might see a professional Christian counselor, others will seek advice from wise mentors, and others may take a sabbatical

or a retreat in nature. You might combine several of these into a journey of healing that meets your needs. The important thing is to actually seek help. Don't pretend that unaddressed grief isn't going to have repercussions on the health and stability of your family, your marriage, and the lives of your children. Your ability to minister effectively will be compromised, whether you can see it now or not.

As families who have dedicated our lives to serving God's people, we have a duty and an obligation to humbly do whatever it takes to seek emotional health and psychological balance in our own lives. If we don't, we cannot know the damage our attempts at ministry may do to others because of the issues we are unwilling to face in the mirror.

If you or a ministry family you know are suffering, I hope you will prayerfully consider what steps you can take to initiate an intentional journey of healing.



Journal, she also
wives.

SARAH K. ASAFTEI is a pastor's wife and work-at-home mom in the southern United States. She grew up as a missionary kid; married an Eastern European; worked for the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission; and loves writing, traveling, evangelism, and women's ministry. In addition to writing for *The*

co-authors a blog for young pastors'

Revival and REFORMATION

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the early rain was only a prelude of what is to come. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit in abundance in the last days (Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1).

There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus, studying His Word, understanding His truth, and seeking His promise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the fulfilling of the gospel commission.

"A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. . . . A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121).



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SHEPHERDESS ADVISORY

GC ADVISORY MEETINGS EMPHASIZE UNITED PRAYER, PLAN FOR NEXT FIVE YEARS

Division Shepherdess Coordinators and Ministerial Secretaries from around the world gathered for a week of prayer, planning, and fellowship at the General Conference World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland from March 14–20, 2011. Sponsored by the Ministerial Association, the Advisory meetings gave the Coordinators an opportunity to meet the Ministerial Association Secretaries, learn how the Association could help them in the world field, and together make plans for the next five years.

The Advisory meetings began each day with a time of worship and prayer. Ministerial Association staff led out in a variety of prayer formats, including individual and small-group prayer. One format used was the ACTS prayer, in which each individual prays in short sentences as the entire group is led through Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. They also taught the importance of affirming each other's prayer requests, singing together, and praying Scriptures. Interceding for each other's personal and Division needs in prayer brought precious unity to the group.

"I never thought I would see this day happen, where we would come together as a group of leaders and spend quality time praying and interceding for each other," said one attendee. One ministerial



Shepherdess Coordinators with Janet Page



Division Shepherdess Coordinators meeting together to discuss plans for the next five years



Shepherdess Coordinators from each division meeting with Nancy Wilson (wearing light blue)

couple's daughter began improving from a serious illness after the Advisory attendees interceded for her in prayer.

The Shepherdess Coordinators spent time with Janet Page, Shepherdess International Director, on two separate days, discussing the needs of each Division and how Shepherdess International could best assist them. Nancy Wilson, Shepherdess sponsor, met with the ladies one afternoon, affirming the role of the pastor's wife and encouraging them to ensure that pastors spend time with their families each week.

As the Advisory meeting drew to a close, attendees enjoyed a special fellowship dinner on Thursday evening, a wonderful Friday-night vespers program and an uplifting worship service on Sabbath morning. The meetings ended on Sunday with an Adventist and U.S. history tour led by Jim Nix, director of the Ellen G. White Estate.

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION ADVISORY MEETINGS SEEK REVIVAL

The Southern-Asia Pacific Division (SSD) held Ministerial and Shepherdess Advisory meetings in May 2011. Leaders from across the Division gathered in Manila to meet with representatives from the GC Ministerial Association and plan for the next five years. Shepherdess Coordinators from each union and conference spent a day with Helen Gulfan, SSD Shepherdess Coordinator, and Janet Page, Shepherdess International Director.

Advisory attendees earnestly sought revival and reformation through corporate prayer and worship, and many committed to praying during the 777 prayer time each day. "It is so encouraging to meet with God's leaders around the world and see how much they love



Mrs. Helen Gulfan, SSD Shepherdess Coordinator

God, how hard they are working to reach people for Jesus and how they are training others to reach out," says Page.

Gulfan hosted an "Evening of Prayer and Fellowship" for SSD's Shepherdess Coordinators, the wives of SSD administrators and pastors, and AIIAS Seminary faculty and staff wives. Attendees came in their countries' costumes, made new friends over supper, and enjoyed several musical selections. Page shared how her life has been changed through united prayer and spending time alone with God each morning. She also led the group through the ACTS Prayer model of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

God's presence was felt throughout the evening. "I am so encouraged that I am not the only one who struggles. It is so comforting to hear that Jesus understands me and loves me even though I struggle to spend time with Him," said one lady. Others commented, "I love praying short sentence-prayers in a group and breaking out in song and claiming Bible promises. I sensed God's presence here."



Shepherdesses at the meeting in Manila, Philippines



Union Shepherdess Coordinators with Janet Page and Helen Gulfan

"THEN THOSE WHO FEARED THE LORD SPOKE WITH EACH OTHER, AND THE LORD LISTENED TO WHAT THEY SAID. IN HIS PRESENCE, A SCROLL OF REMEMBRANCE WAS WRITTEN TO RECORD THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO FEARED HIM AND LOVED TO THINK ABOUT HIM. 'THEY WILL BE MY PEOPLE' SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY. 'ON THE DAY WHEN I ACT, THEY WILL BE MY OWN SPECIAL TREASURE. . . .'"

Malachi 3:16,17, NLT

ACTS Prayer Format

ADORATION: I praise You for being . . .

CONFESSION: I confess the sin of . . .

THANKSGIVING: I choose to express my spiritual blessings . . .

SUPPLICATION: I pray for. . .

Today, I need to do the following with:

God

My Family

My Character

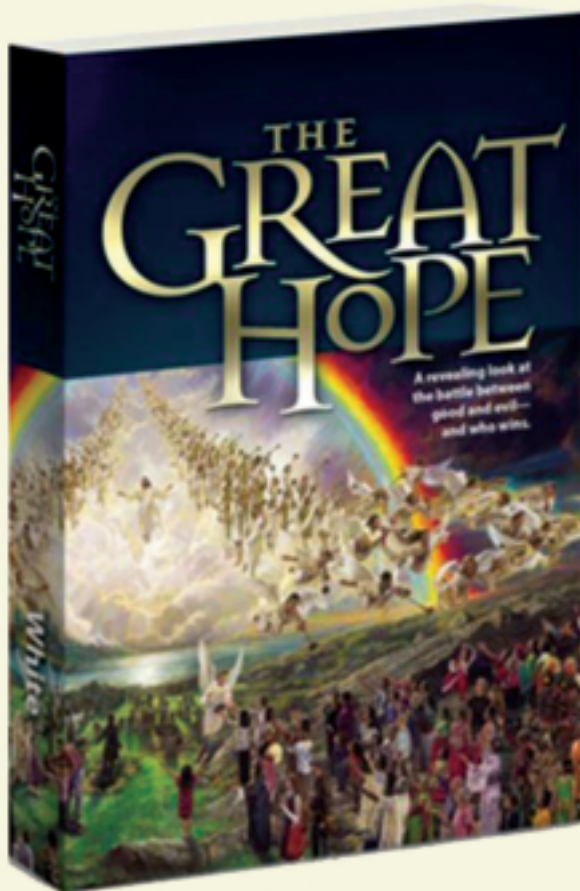
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