



THE JOURNAL
A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

Vol. 33 | First Quarter 2016

*Flourishing
Together*



ON THE COVER

Is the stress of ministry taking a toll on your marriage? Are you both in an emotional and spiritual desert? Praying together and for each other can strengthen you as a couple.



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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.

Hope for Discouragement

I WAS NERVOUS WHEN HE CAME! Silently I would pray, “Please, Lord, let him see that praying together makes a difference.” Privately, I kept crying out to God. I just knew he would be bored.

I led a weekly prayer group at the conference headquarters. The team included church members who believed in the power of united prayer and had promised to keep confidentiality. We wanted to pray for and with our workers about their ministries, their families, and personal requests. We kept a log of requests and answers.

Slowly, word spread, and people began to come pray with us and share their requests. Heather, the wife of a departmental director, was impressed to join us. She told her husband about it and encouraged him to join her.

Bill was a young executive—analytical, intelligent, fast moving, a get-it-done kind of guy. He had a very real prayer life, a connection with God, and had fasted and prayed many times. With his energy level decreasing, his joy in ministry fading, and growing doubt and fear, he questioned whether he was the wrong man for the job. He was tasked with developing the student literature ministry program.

But teens and college students were not interested in spending a summer selling books door to door. Finding locations, lodging, and vehicles were just a few of Bill’s many challenges. He was very experienced with this ministry,

“The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of the church are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer.”

*Manuscript Releases,
vol. 9, p. 303*

but no matter what successful methods he tried, responses were meager.

As Heather describes, Bill caught the flavor of people praying together over issues and thought it was a good idea. He attended every time his schedule allowed. Changes began, and miracles happened. Bill would come in praising God and sharing how God was working. He would say things like, “Well, we knelt and prayed for one hour, and this is what happened.”

The program began to grow, and Bill got excited as he saw his prayers answered. Young people were signing up. Logistics and challenges were solved. In time, a waiting list became the challenge.

Today the program has increased from one to fifteen teams. Thousands of pieces of literature have been sold (scholarships for Adventist schools are also part of the program). Many Bible studies have been given, and baptisms have followed. Leaders for related ministries have been trained. Other conferences have started literature ministries programs too.

Now Bill is bringing young leaders-in-training into the prayer group to experience how God works through united prayer. He became a believer and has led hundreds to experience the power of praying together. In this issue you’ll find an article on prayer by Bill and Heather. I think you’ll enjoy it!

“If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:19, 20, KJV).

If you haven’t yet, I hope you will go to our Revival and Reformation website (revivalandreformation.org) and sign up for United in Prayer. Thousands are finding it a blessing that deepens and grows their spiritual lives. Plus, how exciting it is to pray together about world church mission and see God work!

Janet Page serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer.

7



Because of Your Words

A GLIMPSE BEHIND
THE CURTAIN

WE LOVE THE BOOK OF DANIEL!

Many of us enjoy a familiarity with this prophetic gem dating back to our childhood: the furnace, the lions, the stunning accuracy of its prophecies. But hidden beneath all this lies an amazing story about prayer and the supernatural. Perhaps more than in any other place in Scripture, God briefly parts the curtain between the seen and the unseen and gives us a tantalizing peek at what happens when we pray.

PRAYER POWER

Daniel, by now a senior citizen, knows that God's people and city are not faring well. The restoration of Jerusalem faces serious opposition. In response to this crisis, Daniel fasts (Dan. 10:3) and prays. At the end of 21 days he receives a vision. Awestruck, Daniel can hardly breathe; he lies flat on the ground and can't stop shaking. An angel touches and strengthens him; he covers on the ground on his hands and knees (verse 10).

The angel then says, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you" (verse 11). How encouraging! In response to earnest prayer God acted by sending an angel to Daniel—as He had done already in the previous chapter (Dan. 9:23).

The angel continues: "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, . . . *your words were heard; and I have come because of your words*" (Dan. 10:12). Incredible—God acts in answer to our prayers!

DIGGING DEEPER

But wait, you say—Daniel was praying 21 days ago. What was the holdup?

The next verse is, in our minds, surprising, perhaps even baffling, and definitely one of the most intriguing passages of Scripture. Listen as

“When God seems to be deaf, passive, uninterested, and far removed—remember the angel’s words to Daniel.”

the angel explains what happened “on the way”:

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia” (verse 13).

What? He got “held up” on the way? He got “stuck” with this “prince” for the 21 days Daniel had been fasting and praying? What prince, and why (and how?) did the prince hold him up? What kind of resistance did the prince offer? And why did the angel need “help”—as if he couldn’t accomplish what he was attempting to do without that help?

Evidently God sent the angel “from the first day,” but no answer appeared for 21 days because of supernatural background action.

To make matters more intriguing, the Hebrew word translated “prince” occurs 420 times in the Old Testament but not once does it refer to a king.¹ This has led some translators to render the Hebrew of verse 13 as “spirit prince” (NLT),² “angel prince” (TEV; *Message*),³ or even “guardian angel” (CEV).⁴ Many commentators⁵ then conclude that this “prince” against which the angel struggles (again in verse 20) is actually an evil supernatural being whose assignment is the people of the Persian Empire.⁶ Whether the angel wrestled with a supernatural or human prince, it is clear that Cyrus was hindering the path of success for God’s people.

WHAT ABOUT OUR PRAYERS?

There are a number of important lessons involving *our* prayers:

First, *from the moment we begin to pray, God hears us.* How eagerly, almost impatiently, parents wait to hear their child’s first words. They listen carefully for those memorable one or two syllables. As our children grow older we still eagerly wish to know their needs, and hear ourselves saying: “Don’t cry. Just *tell* me what you need.” How much more will our Lord strain His ears to hear our every prayer. “A divine hand is reached toward you. The hand of the Infinite is stretched over the battlements of heaven to grasp your hand in its embrace.”⁷ What a thrilling picture of God—eagerly leaning over the banisters of heaven and reaching down to us.



Because of Your Words

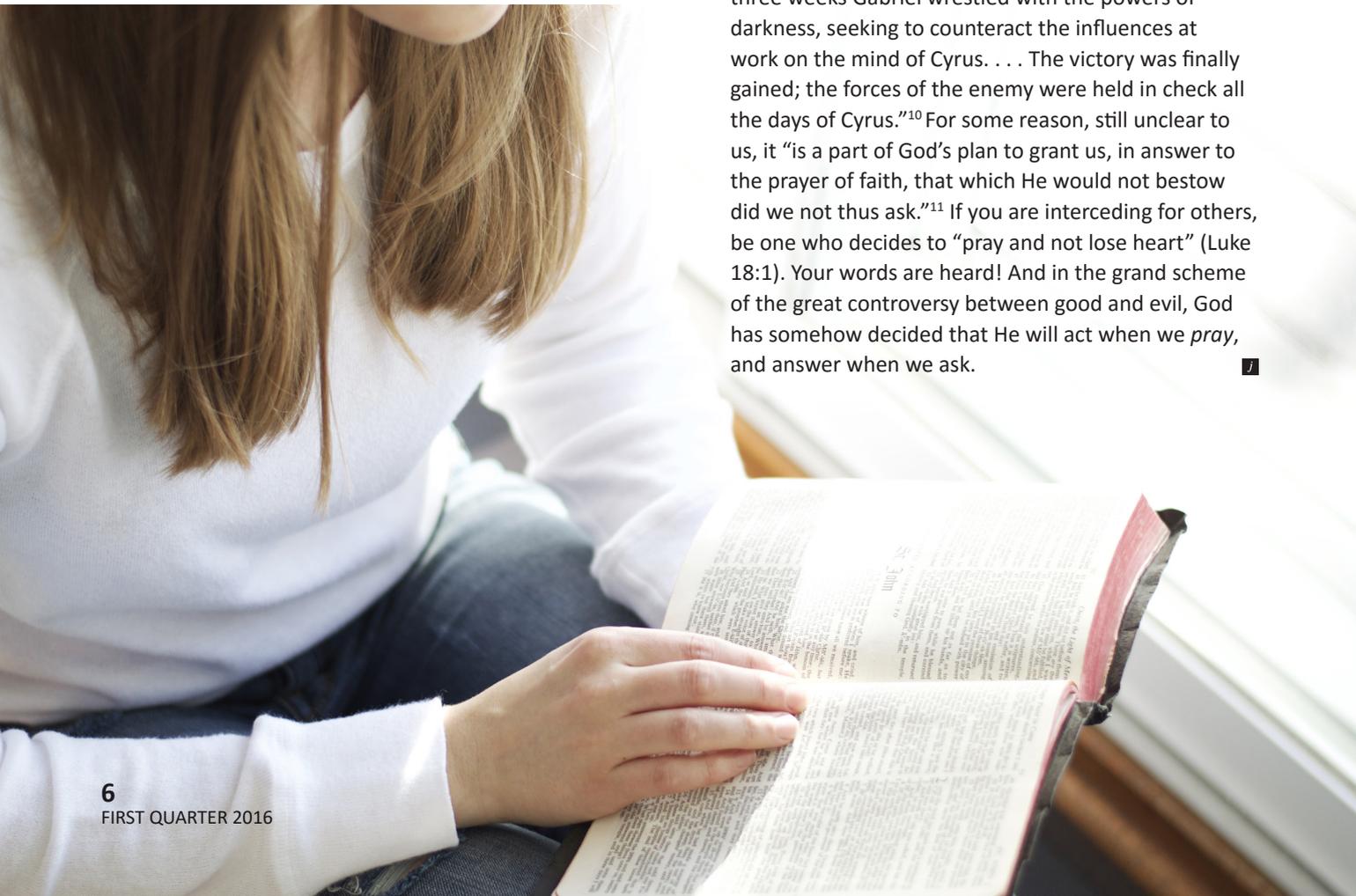
Recently our 8-year-old daughter unknowingly reiterated the unspoken cry of our world as she was about to fall asleep. She asked: “Does God really hear me when I pray? There are millions of people in the world.” Psalm 33:13-15 says, “The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. . . . He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.”

Second, *a delay doesn't mean God isn't working in the background.* Perhaps there is a difficult, seemingly impossible situation with a spouse or a child, and when you prayed, things seemed to get worse. When God seems to be deaf, passive, uninterested, and far removed—remember the angel's words to Daniel. God heard Daniel's humble, submissive

prayers *immediately*, but supernatural background action caused a delay. “Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly. . . . Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage.”⁸

Sometimes God allows delay simply for our good. Up to age 27, I (Heather) was praying for the right husband, if indeed I was to be married. Did God hear my prayer immediately? Certainly. Did He answer it immediately? Seven years I waited for “Mr. Right,” who also was waiting on God for the answer to his prayers. Looking back, I'm so glad for the seven-year delay! “God does not always answer our prayers the first time we call upon Him; for should He do this, we might take it for granted that we had a right to all the blessings and favors He bestowed upon us. Instead of searching our hearts to see if any evil was entertained by us, any sin indulged, we should become careless, and fail to realize our dependence upon Him.”⁹

So what happened with the angel of Daniel 10? “For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus. . . . The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus.”¹⁰ For some reason, still unclear to us, it “is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.”¹¹ If you are interceding for others, be one who decides to “pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). Your words are heard! And in the grand scheme of the great controversy between good and evil, God has somehow decided that He will act when we *pray*, and answer when we ask. 7



¹ F. D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1955), vol. 4, p. 859.

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⁵ Ellen White allows for this possible

interpretation: “For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 572). *The SDA Bible Commentary* also allows for this. However, commentators such as William Shea believe the word refers simply to one of Cyrus’ senior officials. See William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader’s Guide* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2005), pp. 236-238.

⁶ If the “spirit prince” interpretation is adopted, it need not be confused with the “territorial spirits” concept used often by Pentecostal/Charismatic interpreters; note that Daniel nowhere attempts to command the demon of Persia to be cast out.

⁷ Ellen G. White, in *Bible Echo*, Dec. 1, 1892.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 370.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares*, p. 100.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 572.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 525.

Heather and Bill Krick live in California, where Bill is the director of literature ministries for the Central California Conference and Heather homeschools their two daughters, Savannah and Heidi.

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Pastoral Ministry

I'M A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST today because of my father. I come from a long line of Adventists. Grandparents on both sides of my family were employed by the church, and my dad is a pastor. I've seen my share of church politics, cynical members, and "in-name-only" Adventists. As a teen I wrestled with whether or not I wanted to be part of such an imperfect body of believers.

If my dad had allowed the churches he pastored to swallow him whole

with their lists of expectations, I would have walked out of the church. But instead of succumbing to the consuming pressures of pastoral ministry, he invested in his family. My dad consistently spent time with me, and his investment made all the difference. I never had to compete with the church for my father's attention. Far too many pastors' kids can't make that statement. My dad's loyalties were: God, family, church work. I never wondered where I ranked on his list of priorities. He was dedicated to his work as a pastor, but he consistently communicated to me that my needs were as important as church members' needs.

The other day I heard a speaker talking to a crowd of pastors. He asked them to imagine whom they would look for when they got to heaven. He jokingly wondered if they'd be looking around for that "influential" board member or overly "needy" parishioner. The audience chuckled and then got quiet. Of course they wouldn't be looking for those people—they'd be seeking the faces of their wives, husbands, children. Then the speaker asked a haunting question: Are you investing as much in your family as you are in your churches? Who or what gets the best of your time and energy? Is your family subsisting on the scraps of time left over after ministry? As a pastor's wife and mother of four kids under age six, I'm constantly trying to find balance. I know I don't get it right every time, but my goal is to be continually improving.



Pastoral ministry can make us feel as if we are at the mercy of everyone else's needs. Jesus gave some advice that stands in glaring contradiction to the typical way we do church work. He told his disciples: "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31, NLT). The idea of Jesus and His disciples taking time off is a revolutionary concept for some of us.

One pastor's wife confided to me that her husband never takes a regular day off and that they haven't had a family vacation since starting ministry several years ago. Talk about a recipe for family destruction and burnout! The rest of Mark 6:31 is even more shocking. "He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat." This flies in the face of a pastor's job description, right? Taking time off when people's needs are greatest? So much is wrapped up in this verse.

Our view of ministry has morphed into something quite different than Jesus' model. I think there are three reasons for this:

First, it's easy to slip into the subconscious idea that "saving the world" depends on us. Yes, God has chosen us to be His hands to reach the world. But often "His hands" get so caught up in *doing* that we give little thought to whether it is "God's doing" or just plain "doing." There is always some new program to organize, a meeting to attend, or some person needing help. We must ask God if something is truly His work or simply our attempt at working for Him. We easily overburden ourselves with minutia, which ultimately holds us back from accomplishing what God has in mind.

Second, service can become self-serving. It feels good to be needed and appreciated, but if these desires become the driving force behind our ministry, we are actually ministering to ourselves. I struggle with

this one in particular. Tending four young children day in and day out doesn't bring many pats on the back. As a result, I'm often tempted to accept more public types of ministry. The appreciation I receive feels good, but it should not motivate my service. Luke 16:10 is a good verse for this: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much" (NIV). Attentiveness to simple family needs may seem insignificant and thankless, but until we prove faithful in this, we are not ready for a broader field of service.

Third, it can be hard to admit that we're not Energizer bunnies with an endless supply of health. We forget we have real physical, mental, and spiritual needs. Sometimes ministry will push us to our limits, but this should not be the norm. Jesus recognized that both He and His disciples needed a break. They were on the verge of burning out. The demands were high, yet Jesus chose to pull back. Their internal needs trumped the external demands placed upon them. As pastoral families, we have to listen to our limitations. The effectiveness of God's ministry through us requires us to confront this reality. Unrelenting public ministry will bankrupt our spiritual health, undermine mental effectiveness, and shorten our lives! Jesus is calling us to "go off . . . to a quiet place and rest awhile" on a consistent basis.

I'm learning to regularly ask myself these questions: What is the driving force behind all my "doing"? Am I realizing God's priorities? Has my ministry become self-service? Is spiritual, mental, or physical bankruptcy looming? If "yes," then I need to rethink my priorities.

Don't miss out on God's dreams for you and your family. For my father, I am living proof of a dream come true, a daughter who is still running after God. Thanks, Dad, for practicing authentic ministry by investing in me!

Heather Shurtliff has been ministering alongside her husband for seven years, both as a pastor's wife and as the mother of four energetic young children. As the fourth generation of ministry leaders in their family, she and her husband know firsthand the value of keeping priorities straight.

Warning! Burnout Ahead

“WHO GETS TO SMELL THE ROSES?” snarls a harried pastor’s wife. “All I smell is burnt rubber and hot brakes as I race from one crisis to the next.”

PEOPLE HELPERS ARE VULNERABLE!

Anyone whose primary activities involve personal relationships is a prime candidate for burnout—pastors, physicians, nurses, counselors, teachers, and, of course, mothers. That often puts many women at triple risk since they wear so many hats. For example, without a multi-gifted pastoral staff, the pastor’s wife often finds herself counseling, helping direct the Christian education ministry, entertaining out-of-town guests, teaching a children’s Bible class, and singing in the choir, to say nothing of trying to be a Proverbs 31 wife and mother. These are the same women that are often homeschooling their children, teaching in the Christian dayschool, or working at a secular job to help supplement the family’s income.

MAKE AN ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

God does not hold you accountable to keep six plates spinning at once like a juggler in a carnival.

Remember that Jesus told Martha, “Thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part” (Luke 10:41, 42, KJV). In other words, any project or relationship that distracts us from “that good part”—our fellowship with God—is second-best.

My husband, Roger, and I try to remind each other, “Don’t sweat the little things.” What are “the little things”? We answer ourselves, “Most things are really little things.” Remember that God and people are always more important than things and schedules. Often interruptions are opportunities in disguise.



PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1. Learn to say “No.”** When asked to do something, consider carefully before you answer. Is this really God’s will or am I feeling pressure to conform to someone’s expectation?
- 2. Practice delegating.** Teach your children to take regular responsibilities. Encourage other ladies in the church to lead in areas they are gifted for. Don’t think you have to do it all.
- 3. Stop striving for perfection.** Some things aren’t worth your “best” effort. You are human, and it is all right to let some things go. What is important to you, to your husband, and to your children? Will it really matter if you don’t get the floor mopped today?
- 4. Reduce your expectations of others.** Even Christians can be picky, critical, sarcastic, lazy, and backbiting—remember the Corinthian Christians? So lay aside your clipboard of expectations, your hidden agendas for improvement, your attempts to

be an “assistant Holy Spirit.” Let God be God and people be people. Love them where they are and pray for them. Only God can change them.

- 5. Take care of your health.** Check up on your eating habits. Take time every day for exercise. (Walking is my physical and mental therapy.) Visit your doctor if you continue to have physical symptoms. Statistics show that even adults need eight to nine hours of sleep a night. Stop saying “I can’t change,” and see what lifestyle changes God wants you to make.
- 6. Set aside one day a week for rest.** The creation principle shows that God designed us to function best with at least one day out of every seven for rest and for fellowship with God and other Christians. Learn to take mini-breaks throughout the week. Meditate on Scripture, drink some refreshing fruit juice, play the piano for fun, read a sweet story, dream about a favorite vacation place.

God is still in control, and the world will not fall apart if you take a nap. Yes—and please stop and smell the roses!

Joy Rice Martin is editor of Joyful Woman. This article was adapted from the March/April 2012 issue of Joyful Woman.

Warning Signs of Stress

- Extreme lassitude or hyperactivity. Either one feels sluggish and drained or super-revved to the point of explosion.
- Irritability.
- Low tolerance for loud noises, sudden movements, minor frustrations of life.
- Frequent unexplained physical complaints: headaches, stomachaches, backaches, heart palpitations, dizziness, menstrual difficulties.
- Sleep disturbances: insomnia, nightmares, or any change in sleep patterns.
- Loss of interest in normal activities and pleasures.
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair; spells of weepiness.
- Sexual dysfunction: diminished sexual desire and response.
- Difficulty concentrating and memory loss.
- Low self-worth with accompanying feelings of failure and guilt.
- Feeling that God is far away.



Red Flags

THE BRIGHT COLOR OF A RED flag is definitely an attention getter. Historically red flags have had political, military, legal, and scientific significance. Red flags have also been used during auto races when conditions were unsafe. They have been used to indicate a high risk of fire in severe dry conditions, on beaches when it's unsafe to swim, and during the threat or presence of severe weather. No matter when or where a red flag appears, the universal message is the same: "Warning! You have cause for concern."

INVISIBLE RED FLAGS

Visually, it is almost impossible to miss a red flag. However, red flag warnings can also appear as feelings that urge us to pause, listen to our intuition, and reconsider our course of action. Here are some everyday examples of intuition-based red flags:

1. While in a grocery store, you notice a toddler standing up in a shopping cart. **Red flag:** There is high risk for an injurious fall.
2. You're driving along the highway and suddenly notice the car in front of you is weaving about on the road. **Red flag:** An accident may be imminent.
3. The friend you are talking to on the phone

sounds different. Her voice is sad and lacks the usual vitality. **Red Flag:** Is the friend sick? Discouraged? Depressed?

4. You look out the window and notice the sky is dark with heavy, greenish clouds. **Red Flag:** Is a severe storm on the way?
5. Your neighbor, an elderly man, is standing on the corner of a busy street waiting to cross. **Red Flag:** Can he see well enough to cross safely?
6. As you come home from work one night, you notice a slight bluish haze in the air near your living room ceiling. **Red Flag:** Is a fire developing?
7. Your co-worker has come down with a severe case of the flu. **Red Flag:** Flu is very contagious, and you might have been exposed.

DON'T IGNORE THESE RED FLAGS

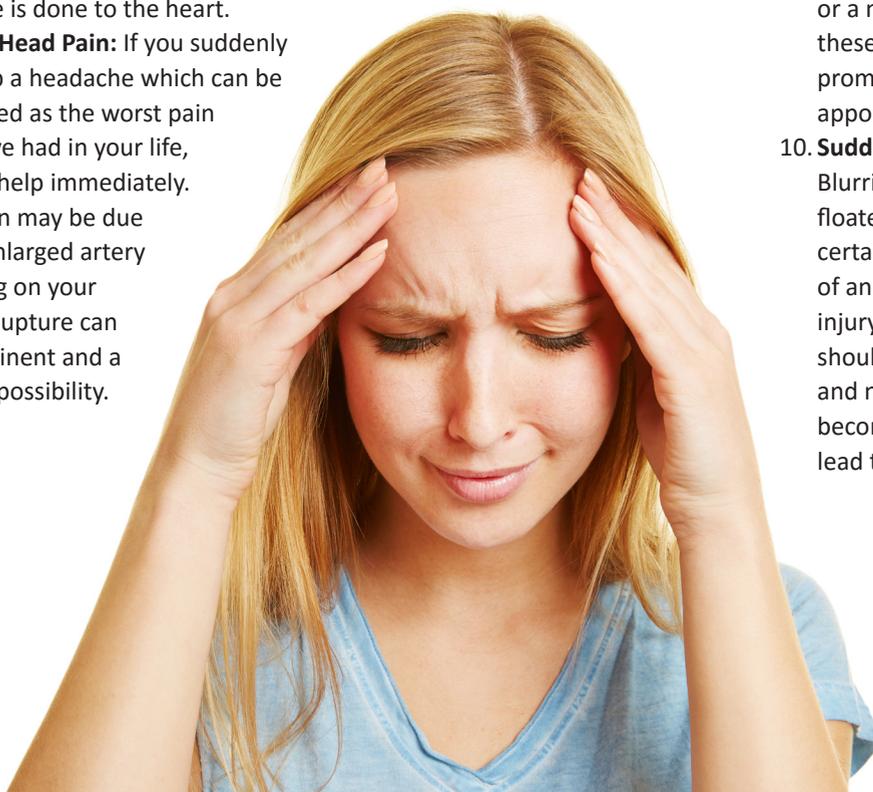
When it comes to personal health issues, most of us are not above ignoring medical symptoms from time to time, and in most cases without bad outcomes. We may avoid going to the doctor for something that might be insignificant. Some avoid seeking medical evaluation out of fear that a serious

illness might be diagnosed. Others avoid medical attention because they prefer to self-treat with more familiar and trusted home remedies.

The phrase “time is brain” refers to the fact that hospital-based treatments to restore blood flow to the brain following signs and symptoms of a stroke are effective only if begun within three hours of the onset of a stroke. With early treatment the risk of permanent brain damage can be decreased in many cases. This concept applies to a number of potentially serious red flag symptoms. With early diagnosis and initiation of treatment, a more devastating prognosis might be avoided.

Here are some red flags conditions which could have better outcomes with early medical diagnosis and treatment:

1. **Chest Pain:** Not all chest pain is the result of a heart attack, but you can't know for sure without medical evaluation. And if it is a heart attack, time is heart muscle. The longer you wait, the more damage is done to the heart.
2. **Severe Head Pain:** If you suddenly develop a headache which can be described as the worst pain you have had in your life, call for help immediately. The pain may be due to an enlarged artery pressing on your brain. Rupture can be imminent and a deadly possibility.



3. **Abdominal Pain With Excess Gas:** If, over some time, you have unusually significant bloating, loss of appetite, or a change in bowel habits, contact your doctor to rule out cancer or other serious gastrointestinal conditions.
4. **A Persistent Cough:** If that cough of yours is lingering over several weeks, see your doctor. You could have an infection, cancer, a heart condition, or Gastrointestinal Reflux Disease.
5. **Post-Menopausal Bleeding:** If you are not supposed to be bleeding and you are, something is wrong. Causes could be endometrial polyps or cancer, imbalanced hormones, or an atrophying uterus. Seeing your doctor may be the first step in saving your life.
6. **Unexplained Weight Loss:** If you notice you are dropping pounds effortlessly and you aren't upping your exercise or reducing calories, you have cause for concern. Colon cancer, diabetes, or hyperthyroidism could be to blame. Don't delay with this red flag.
7. **A Cramp That Won't Go Away:** Persistent pain, cramping, or tenderness in a leg could indicate a blood clot (or deep vein thrombosis: DVT). The serious risk is that the clot could travel to the lungs and block an artery, thus stopping the heart and resulting in immediate death. Symptoms can include pain or swelling in the calf, pain behind the knee, or pain or tenderness in the thigh.
8. **Shortness of Breath:** A tightening of the muscles around the airway, along with inflammation of the lining of the airways and thick mucus production, indicates an acute asthma attack. At a critical level this condition could stop the heart. Asthma symptoms indicate a need for medical evaluation and ongoing treatment to lower the risk of a severe episode.
9. **The Seven Warning Signs of Cancer:** These include changes in bowel or bladder patterns, a sore that does not heal, unusual bleeding, thickened breast or testicular tissue, indigestion, obvious changes in the appearance of a mole, or a nagging cough. Any one of these red flag symptoms should prompt you to schedule a doctor's appointment.
10. **Sudden Changes in Vision:** Blurriness, halos, blind spots, floaters, or the inability to see at certain distances could be a sign of an eye disease, aging, an eye injury, or diabetes. Vision changes should be considered serious and never ignored, as they can become worse and sometimes lead to blindness.

“You are as important to your health as it is to you.” —Terri Guillemets

SPIRITUAL HEALTH RED FLAGS

Consider these symptoms of spiritual illness:

1. **Feelings of Anxiety and Stress:**

Caused by a significant lack of prayer. Immediately begin a steady daily prayer routine and watch anxiety and stress melt away (1 Pet. 5:7).

2. **Tormented by Guilt:** Caused by lack of confession of sin. Seeking forgiveness results in a clean feeling much like taking a refreshing shower. The mind is relieved and filled with peace (Ps. 145:18, 19).

3. **Spiritual Starvation:** Caused by neglecting Bible study. The Word of God contains food for the spirit and brings nourishment and life to the hungry soul (John 6:35).

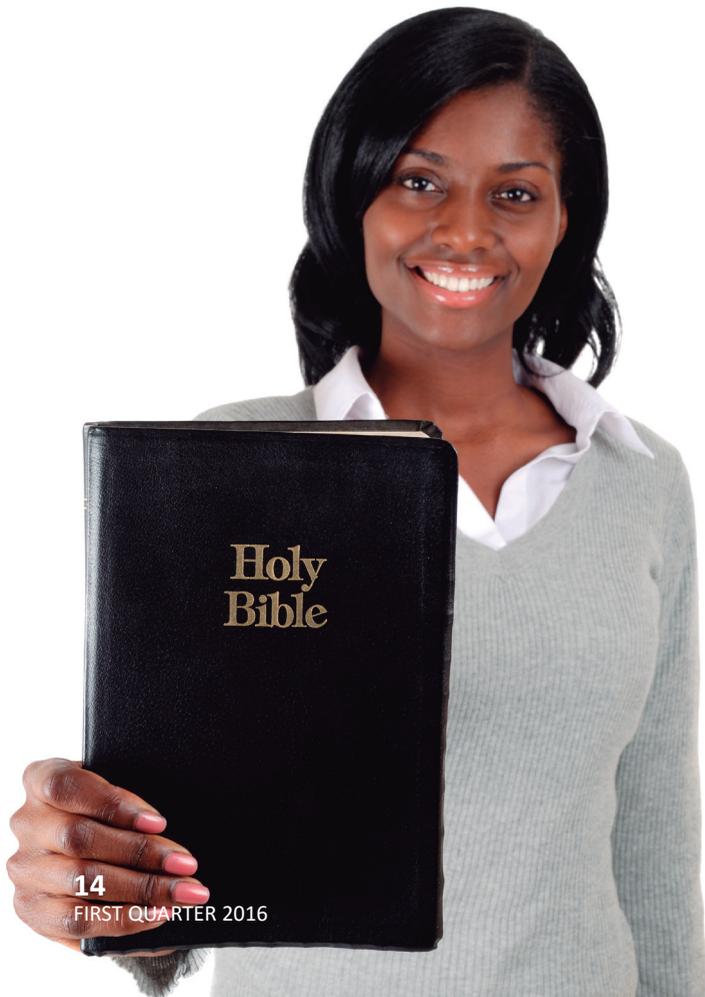
4. **Dissatisfaction and Discontent:** Caused by a lack of thankfulness. Each day present your thanks and praise to God and watch your discontent diminish and disappear (Ps. 59:16).

5. **Threatened Collapse Under Heavy Burdens:** Caused by a decrease in church attendance and observance of the Sabbath day as ordained by God. Without that one day of rest and worship, the body and spirit receive no rejuvenation (Matt. 11:28).

6. **Difficulty Getting Along With People:** Caused by a lack of love for God. Loving the Lord with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength will cause a heart transformation and a loving, peace-filled spirit (Luke 10:27; John 7:38).

7. **Insensitivity to the Needs of Others:** Caused by spiritual distance from God. This condition will naturally decrease as one develops a close relationship with Him. Soon it will become as natural as breathing to respond to the needy, the sick, the suffering, and the poor (Heb. 13:16).

Spiritual and physical health are closely related. “When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men [and women] suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241). We are “fearfully and wonderfully” made and are given the responsibility of caring for our amazing bodies. We can start by heeding those red flag warnings. 7



Rae Lee Cooper writes from Washington State, which she and her husband now call home. Enjoyable activities include being more involved in the lives of her children and grandchildren, teaching music, and participating in church community health and welfare programs.

Revival and REFORMATION

GUIDANCE for the JOURNEY HOME

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Flourishing Together

THE TINY CHURCH HAD ONLY 18 members, but it was full of family conflicts, interpersonal challenges, and destructive criticism. It was so hard to change their negative culture. We were fresh out of college, and they had an inherent distrust of pastors.

We had a choice: we could shrivel up in this emotional and spiritual desert, or we could strengthen our dependency on God, learn how to support each other, and find a way to flourish in spite of our circumstances. It wasn't easy. We were perilously close to burning out and giving up. But we learned how important it is to help protect each other, and our marriage, from the wear and tear of ministry.

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER—Heb. 4:16

Just hearing our partners pray for us can soothe away the stress. When we pray for our partners, we're handing them a magnifying glass that helps them see God's love more clearly. Kate and Liam have different schedules, so they keep two small notebooks on their kitchen table. One is filled with Kate's prayer concerns and one with Liam's. Each day they pick up their partner's book, pray for the person's concerns, and sometimes write a short prayer in the notebook or on a slip of paper to carry and read throughout the day.

Tina and Joe send each other short SMS prayers throughout the day. Whenever Joe



“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. . . . Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken”

Ecc. 4:9, 10, 12, NIV

has a challenge he sends Tina a message. He knows she'll be praying for him during a difficult meeting or a sensitive visit. And he does the same for her. These brief, comforting prayers help them to feel closer to God and to each other.

BE INSPIRED TOGETHER

Make a list of Bible verses that strengthen and comfort you. You might focus on Psalm 103, Psalm 145, or 1 John 4:7-21. And Philippians 4 will help re-balance your emotions when you feel drained. Paul has packed this short passage with practical suggestions for flourishing in the desert, such as focusing on the good things in your life, finding gratitude in every situation, praying about your concerns, and supporting each other through your struggles.

ENJOY MOMENTS OF WONDER—Ps. 104

Taking a short walk together up the hill behind our home is one of our lifelines. Along the path we chat, share ideas and prayer concerns, burn off some energy, and immerse ourselves in God's creation. We watch wildlife, pick berries, and notice the trees changing with the seasons. On the summit we catch our breath and admire the hills and valleys in every direction. Someone has inscribed Psalm 121:1 on a rock. We watch the sunset swirls of rose and gold. Twilight mist hovers over the river valleys, and the moon rises with the stars. We're filled with wonder as we wander back home feeling refreshed, happy, and calm.

Admiring God's creation always lifts our hearts and brings us closer together. If you don't have an inspiring place to walk, find some shells, flowers, feathers, or even your own hands. Choose an object, focus on it quietly until you think of at least five things that fill you with wonder, and then spend a few moments sharing your discoveries with each other.

CHOOSE GRATITUDE—1 Thess. 5:18

Even in the desert there are diamonds. They're harder to find, but they're still there. Focusing on God's gifts, even in tough times, can help us to feel more hopeful. Make a list of 30 things

you're thankful for; 30 reasons you're thankful for your spouse; 30 reasons you're glad you're a ministry couple, or 30 good things about pastoring and fellowshiping with your local church.

Create a poster reminding you of your blessings and place it on your bathroom mirror or fridge. Share your gratitude for the smallest blessings. Focus on what went well each day, and thank God for helping you through the challenges.



LAUGH TOGETHER—Prov. 15:13

Laughter fills you with positive hormones that help counteract the stress in your body, especially when you're laughing together. Try making your partner laugh at least once a day. Find crazy cards to send, look at funny photos of animals, watch a Christian comedian for a few minutes, or plan surprises for each other. Search the Internet for clean jokes and humor, play games, and do the things you used to do for fun.

DO SOMETHING WELL TOGETHER—Col. 3:23

Find a ministry or hobby that you both enjoy. During our desert experience we started running marriage retreats. Some of our ministry friends joined a tennis club to help them have fun together, stay healthy, and make friends in their community. You could plant a garden, restore furniture, make music, or go on a mission trip.

KEEP CALM—John 14:27

Take care of each other by lowering your partner's stress and anxiety. In this issue you'll find an article about de-stressing for couples; try the ideas that appeal to you. Try to notice and do more of what soothes your partner. If you accidentally add to your partner's stress, try saying, "I'm so sorry. I realize what I just said or did wasn't very helpful. What can I say or do right now to soothe some of your stress or take something off your load?"

HOLD ON TO HOPE—Jer. 29:11

When you're walking through the desert, the whole world can feel dark, and it's hard to be optimistic. Share your hopes for the next day, week, month, year, and even farther ahead. How can you nurture your spouse's hopes—or make those hopes a reality? How can you encourage your spouse when they are feeling overwhelmed? What are God's hopes for each of you, and how can those hopes comfort you and guide you through the desert?

LOVE GOD, OTHERS, AND YOURSELVES—1 Cor. 13:4

"And the greatest of these is love." When we focus on God's love for us and let His love flow through our lives into each other, we can flourish in the driest deserts. Be kind and gentle, lifting each other's burdens rather than adding to them. Ask your husband or wife what you do that helps them to feel especially loved, and just do it. You'll both be blessed.

And finally, "Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder" (Rom. 12:11, 12, *The Message*). J

Karen Holford writes from her home on a Scottish hillside. Her husband, Bernie, is president of the Scottish Mission.

TIPS TO SURVIVE

THRIVE

DON'T JUST BE A PEOPLE PLEASER

As much as you want everyone to like you, and as much as you want people to think you're doing a good job, remember what *really* matters. Colossians 3:23, 24 reminds us that we serve God, not people. We are responsible to Him. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (NASB).

What a freeing thought! *His* expectations are the only ones that really matter. Of course it's fun to make people happy. And often God calls us to do that. But before accepting responsibilities, saying "yes," or even acting in a certain way, consider your motives. Are you just doing this so that people will be happy with you? Or do you feel that God is leading you to do it? Invest your time and energy in things that God asks you to do. Be the person God wants you to be. This may not always get glory and praise from others, but it will be the most rewarding in the end. Don't be afraid to be honest about who you are, what your gifts are, and how God wants you to invest your time and energy.

Have a survival tip that someone shared with you once upon a time, or that you have learned along the way? Send it in to share here at: spouses@ministerialassociation.org.

Special Quotes

"The presence of Christ alone can make men and women happy. All the common waters of life Christ can turn into the wine of heaven. The home then becomes as an Eden of bliss; the family, a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven."

Adventist Home, p. 28.

"God often brings men to a crisis to show them their own weakness and to point them to the source of strength. If they pray and watch unto prayer, fighting bravely, their weak points will become their strong points. Jacob's experience contains many valuable lessons for us. God taught Jacob that in his own strength he could never gain the victory, that he must wrestle with God for strength from above."

Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, p. 454

"The reason why many of our ministers complain of sickness is, they fail to take sufficient exercise, and indulge in overeating. They do not realize that such a course endangers the strongest constitution. Those who, like yourself, are sluggish in temperament, should eat very sparingly, and not shun physical taxation. Many of our ministers are digging their graves with their teeth. The system, in taking care of the burden placed upon the digestive organs, suffers, and a severe draft is made upon the brain. For every offense committed against the laws of health, the transgressor must pay the penalty in his own body."

Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 141

"We can have the salvation of God in our families; but we must believe for it, live for it, and have a continual, abiding faith and trust in God. The restraint which God's Word imposes upon us is for our own interest. It increases the happiness of our families, and of all around us. It refines our taste, sanctifies our judgment, and brings peace of mind, and in the end, everlasting life. Ministering angels will linger in our dwellings, and with joy carry heavenward the tidings of our advance in the divine life, and the recording angel will make a cheerful, happy record."

Counsels for the Church, p. 151

De-stressing Together

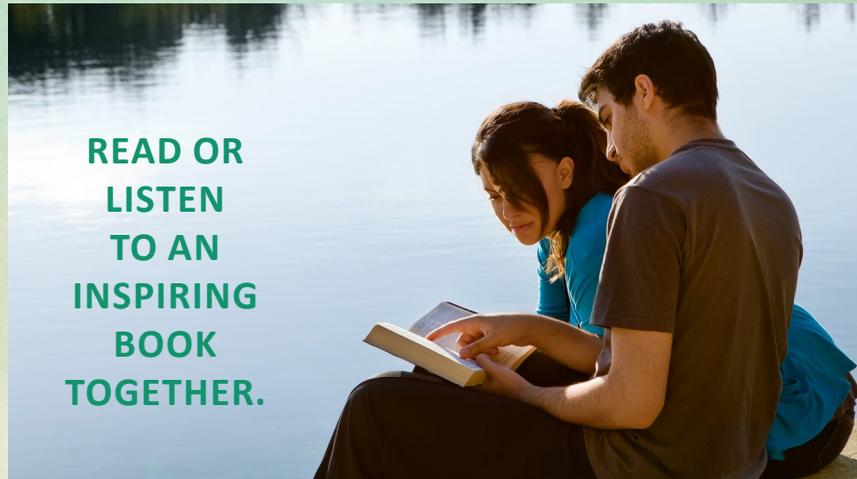
MINISTRY LIFE CAN BE hectic and stressful. If we don't find healthy ways to refresh our spiritual lives, relationships, bodies, thoughts, and emotions, then stresses can build up. We end up feeling ill, tired, and irritable. De-stressing *together* is even better for you because it helps you make positive connections as a couple.

Try some of these ideas when you need to chill out together:



- Create a box of cards containing your favorite Bible verses. Choose one to read at breakfast and keep the words in your mind throughout the day. You might try doodling your own designs on the verse cards.
 - Choose some fragrant body lotion that you both enjoy and spend a few moments massaging each other's hands.
 - Light some candles to create a soothing atmosphere in your home. If you prefer not to light real candles, find some good battery-operated ones that flicker naturally.
 - Do something active together. Run around the block. Take a brisk walk or climb a hill. Go for a short cycle ride. Or play some lively praise music and praise God with every part of your body.
 - Create a peaceful zone in your home—a neat, attractive corner with a couple of comfy chairs, some candles, flowers, and a basket of soothing activities.
 - Make a list together of 30 things God is doing for you, or things He has made for you to enjoy. Spend a few moments being thankful for each one. Or walk through your home together and tell each other three things you are most thankful for in each room.
 - Walk somewhere tranquil for half an hour. Immerse yourselves in the wonder of God's creation by focusing carefully on the details of the flowers, trees, birds, and scenery. Find five natural objects to take home and arrange on a plate to remind you of your walk.
- Pray a short prayer for each other. Ask God to help your spouse experience His love and guidance during the day ahead. Pray for the challenges each of you are facing. Place them in God's hands and let Him look after them.
 - Play soothing worship music in your home or listen through headphones when you're on the move. Let the inspiring words soak into your mind and remind you of God's love and peace.

- Lie on your backs on a blanket on the grass, hold hands, and watch the clouds or stars in the sky.
- Tell each other about one of your really happy memories. Thank God for the memories and the fun times.
- Try smelling lavender, oranges, or freshly baked bread. These fragrances are naturally calming.
- Spend five minutes trying to make each other laugh. A merry heart does good like a medicine (Prov. 17:22).
- Place some golf balls in a couple of basins. Sit down and roll your feet over them to give yourselves an instant foot massage.
- Have a long cuddle together. Cuddling someone you love releases happy, healthy hormones into your bloodstream.
- Have “tea breaks” in your home. Agree on a regular time to take a break from your work so you can sit down together with a favorite drink. Make the break last 15 minutes by sipping slowly and talking about the good things that have happened in your day.
- Break the habit of staying up late to do more work. Set a curfew so you stop working at least half an hour before bedtime to do something soothing.



- Step outside and blow bubbles together. Blowing bubbles makes you breathe out slowly, which helps your whole body to calm down. And it’s fun, too! Or have a fragrant bubble bath together.
- Do something simple and creative together: weed your yard, plant flowers, hook a rug, or bake bread.
- Follow the adult coloring trend by using some creative Christian coloring sheets with prayers and Bible verses. Visit <http://lindisfarne-scriptorium.co.uk> to purchase downloadable designs. Or search the Internet for free Christian coloring pages.
- One of the best antidotes to stress and depression is doing kind things for other people. Spend 20 minutes doing something kind for each other, or work together to do something generous for someone else.
- Imagine you’re both sitting in God’s lap and He’s giving you a big hug. What do you think He would say and do to help you both feel peaceful and loved?

SOOTHING KIT

Gather some items that soothe and re-fresh you. Place them in a basket so they’re ready when you need them. Or make a “soothing kit” for a friend. Items you might include:

- Soothing praise and worship CDs or nature sounds
- A copy of Philippians from your favorite Bible version (Philippians is packed with positive attitude)
- Sachets of hot chocolate or specialty tea bags
- Fragrant lavender bag
- Devotional books and inspiring true stories
- Scented votive candles
- Inspirational coloring sheets and good quality crayons
- Tubs of bubbles to blow
- Fragrant hand creams or bubble baths
- Notecards to send to friends
- A gratitude journal and pen
- A box or notebook of inspiring Bible verses and quotes
- Small, simple craft projects, such as a cross-stitch Bible bookmark
- Interesting and engaging puzzles
- Photo album of happy memories
- A snuggly quilt or throw

The Pastor's Wife and Burnout

UNLIKE THE LYRICAL grandfather's clock that "stopped short never to go again when the old man died," burnout threatens to shut down our physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional mechanisms while we are still living. One dictionary definition of burnout is vivid and compelling: "the time when a jet or rocket engine stops working because there is no more fuel available." Do we allow our fuel to run out? Hawkins, Minirth, Meier, and Thurman describe burnout as "a cluster of symptoms, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or a desire to withdraw from people, and reduced accomplishment (working harder and harder while accomplishing less and less)" (*Before Burnout: Balanced Living for Busy People*).

Burnout and stress are interrelated. Stress results from an accumulation of wear and tear on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual resources of a person. A stress-ridden life is the ideal precursor to burnout.

- Carrie accepted the responsibility of organizing the baby shower for the new pastor's wife. She felt physically exhausted and emotionally drained. The result: Two weeks before the shower, Carrie transferred the planning and organizing of the event to another pastor's wife. Carrie said she was about to "lose it."
- Melanie's husband had alerted her that his staff dinner was going to be in two months. They shopped together for a beautiful dress for Melanie. On the evening of the dinner, Melanie broke down uncontrollably in tears. She did not want to attend the dinner.



“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Isa. 40:31, NIV

- Ruth’s deadline for the budget proposal was fast approaching. She had produced many drafts but found difficulty refining and submitting it to her boss. She felt helpless and ineffective as she kept asking for more and more extensions of her deadline.

Carrie, Melanie, and Ruth are all victims of burnout. Were they aware of this? I doubt it. Although some of us recognize the face of burnout when it looms before us, others are taken by surprise. A look at some causes of burnout can put us on the alert.

CAUSES OF PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

- A poor work environment. Is your workplace unpleasant? Is the lighting generally poor?
- Faulty equipment. What about the equipment you have to work with? Is your employer faithful in its maintenance? Have you approached him/her about fixing your equipment? Complaining to yourself is not enough.
- Unrealistic deadlines. Are the deadlines unreasonable? Are your colleagues and supervisors demanding?
- Irresponsible workmates. Are your workmates willing to pull their weight? Or are they shirkers?

Taking a close look at these causes, or trying to assess other factors that make your job unnecessarily burdensome, can improve the job experience. You may not be able to improve every circumstance,

but you will be able to develop some coping skills. Get help if you feel the need. Your health can be at stake.

RESULTS OF PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

- Irritability. You lose your calm, even-tempered disposition. You display resentment of people, the assignment, and the job place. This attitude can threaten your job.
- Loss of creativity. You have no energy or desire to try innovative methods. Your work becomes a carbon copy of old productions.
- General inefficiency. The work presents a basic appearance or tends to be sloppy.
- Diluted commitment to the job. Emotional attachment and loyalty to the job are missing.
- Poor health. You may have headaches or stomachaches as you approach the work site.



The Pastor's Wife and Burnout

- Absenteeism. This usually increases with time, and also threatens job security.

If you are experiencing two or more of these symptoms, you need to take a serious look at yourself. Turn your frustrations over to God (1 Pet. 5:7). Ask yourself if this is the right job for you. Are you pleased with your production? Develop your organizational skills. Claim God's promise for efficiency and productivity (Phil. 4:13).

BURNOUT IN THE HOME

- Work overload. If Mother has to do all the work in the home, in addition to taking care of the children, running errands, preparing meals, and meeting her own engagements, that is an overload.
- Nondelegation of tasks. Call a family conference and delegate chores. Sharing the load is necessary for the smooth running of the family firm.
- Untrained children. Children are sometimes not taught the skills to help. Teach tasks patiently so children may learn to help.
- Domestic chaos. A constant, chaotic environment can foster burnout in the home. Develop organizational skills and manage your time wisely. Have a few simple survival rules.
- Toxic behavior. Fighting, yelling, name-calling, and unkind words are excellent fodder for burnout. Let the spotlight be on love. Create a calm, peaceful atmosphere. Practice affirmation. Play soothing music often. Encourage laughter in the home.
- Overwork. Work at balancing work and family responsibilities. Avoid a crowded plate.
- Scant family devotions. Commit to having regular family devotions. The presence of God and His holy angels brings a sweet peace to the home. "Kindly words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation and doubt that gather over the soul" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 485).

Recommended Reading

Burton, Valorie. *How Did I Get So Busy?*

Campbell-Slan, Joanna. *I'm Too Blessed to Be Depressed.*

Harvard Business Review. *Work and Life Balance.*

Hawkins, Don; Frank Minirth; Paul Meier; and Chris Thurman. *Before Burnout: Balanced Living for Busy People.*

Hobfoll, Steven E. and Ivonne H. Hobfoll. *Work Won't Love You Back.*

White, Ellen G. *The Adventist Home.*

Subtle choices can steal our sense of balance and overload our plates. Then we ask ourselves, *How did I get so overcommitted?* As pastors' wives we may find ourselves sinking in a quicksand of demands, appointments, and assignments. It took me many years to realize that a person does not *have* to accept every task. The pastor's wife does not need to be the emergency fill-in for every no-show. Yes, we ought to do our tasks with excellence, fulfill our responsibilities, and stand willing to help, but we must exercise reason and good judgment.

Here are two personal rules that can defy burnout:

1. "No" is a complete sentence.
2. Failure to plan on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR PREVENTING BURNOUT

A. Physical preparation. "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down" (Prov. 14:1, NIV).

- Prepare your wardrobe ahead of time. Choosing what to wear can be quite challenging. Try mixing and matching your ensembles, including accessories, in advance. This has worked wonders for me. You will discover how many outfits you really have!
- Learn survival techniques of homemaking. Check home magazines for shortcuts.
- Delegate responsibility to family members. Post chore lists. Even your two-year old can help.
- Eat well. Stop picking at scraps at the kitchen counter while you serve a banquet to your family.
- Sleep and rest well. This will repair you.
- Have an exercise program. Budget at least fifteen minutes a day at least three times a week.

B. Professional preparation. "A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great" (Prov. 18:16, NIV).

- Keep abreast of trends (read journals, attend seminars).
- Network.
- Develop and improve your confidence and skills.
- Approach your task with energy.
- Be trustworthy.

C. Social preparation. "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24, NIV).

- Take an interest in your appearance.
- Dress appropriately.
- Hone your social skills.
- Wear a pleasing countenance.
- Refuse to let others make you ugly.

D. Spiritual preparation. "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zech. 4:6, NIV).

- Meet God first in the morning.
- Acquire the habit of praise. ("Seven times a day I praise You." I use this text, Ps. 119:164, as my literal guide to praise).
- Be a witness.
- Claim God's promise for peace and endurance.

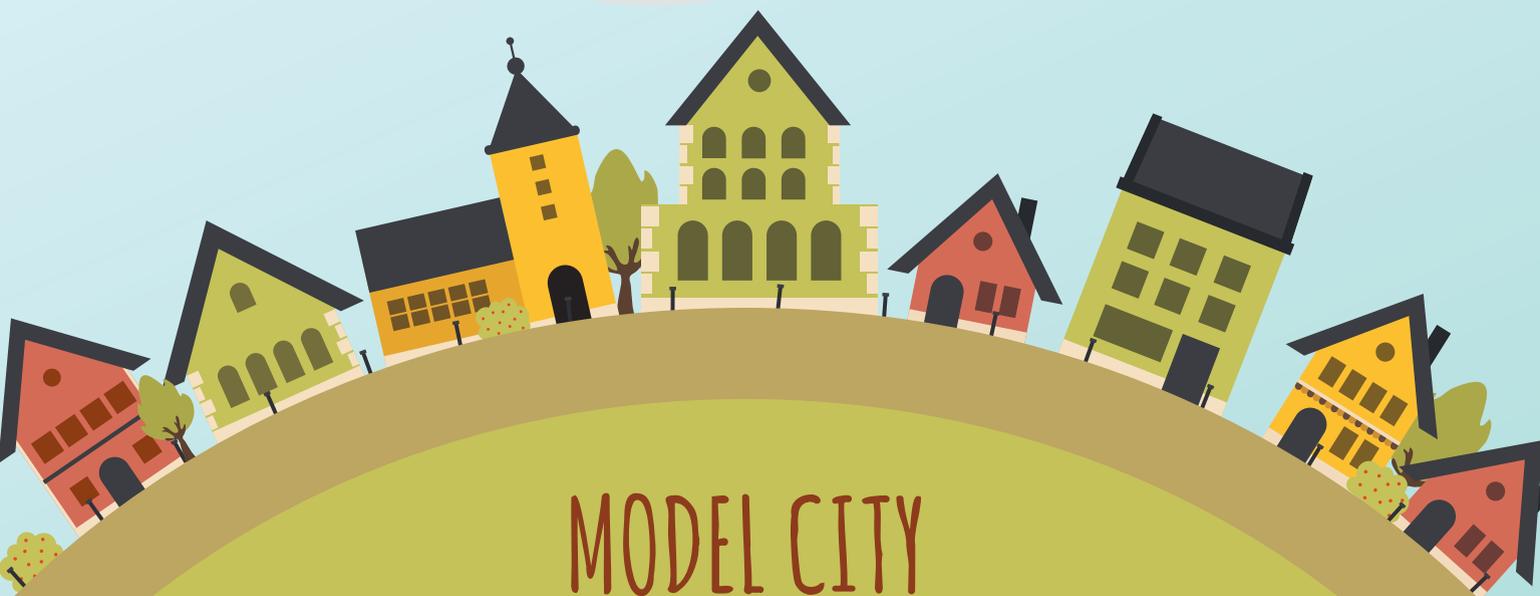
We are servants of a God who loves us and is mindful of our total wellness. He can give us the will and the wisdom to take care of ourselves. With His help we can choose a life of balance rather than burnout. ■

Gloria Trotman, Ph.D., is a retired pastor's wife of more than forty years. She and her husband, Pastor Jansen Trotman, live in Texas, USA.

Heavenly!

I'm really looking forward to heaven, aren't you? I can't wait to be with Jesus! I plan to learn so much about God and explore the whole universe with Him. I want to live in a place where no one will ever be sad or lonely or sick or tired!

What about you? What do you think heaven will be like? Here are some heavenly worship activities to share with your family.



MODEL CITY

Design a heavenly city.

- Use a large sheet of paper. Or use old wallpaper and stick two strips together to make an extra-big square.
- Mark three gates on each side of the square—you'll have twelve gates. Draw straight roads across the paper to join the opposite gates and create a grid. Use this road map to make a layout for your heavenly city.
- Involve the whole family in making or drawing houses, parks, golden streets, pearly gates, and walls of precious stone. Use papers, sparkly scraps, toy bricks, and boxes from your recycling bin to build your amazing heavenly city.
- Why not send us a photo of your heavenly city? We'd love to see it!

A ROOM FOR YOU!



Read John 14:1-3. Jesus is making a room for you in heaven!

- Take an old shoebox and make a model of the room that Jesus is getting ready for you in heaven. Make furniture from scraps of paper and cardboard.
- What will the walls look like? What furniture might you need? What do you have in your bedroom right now that you won't need in heaven?
- If you don't want to build a model, draw a picture instead.
- Jesus is preparing a special place for you in heaven. What are you doing to prepare for heaven? Remember how much He loves you and looks forward to seeing you!

WONDERING . . .

Read Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 from your favorite Bible version. Then wonder about these questions together:

- What do you like best about this picture of heaven?
- What do you most look forward to in heaven?
- What do you think is the most important thing about going to heaven?
- How does this Bible picture of heaven help you understand God's love for you?

YOU'RE INVITED!

Jesus has invited us to live in heaven with Him. It will be way better than the most amazing party and praise time you can ever imagine.

- Design an invitation from Jesus asking you to come live in heaven with Him.
- Make it look really heavenly and choose your best craft materials.
- Make a special invitation and give it to someone who doesn't know that Jesus has invited them to heaven.



BUILD A VERSE!

Make a game to help you learn John 14:2-3.

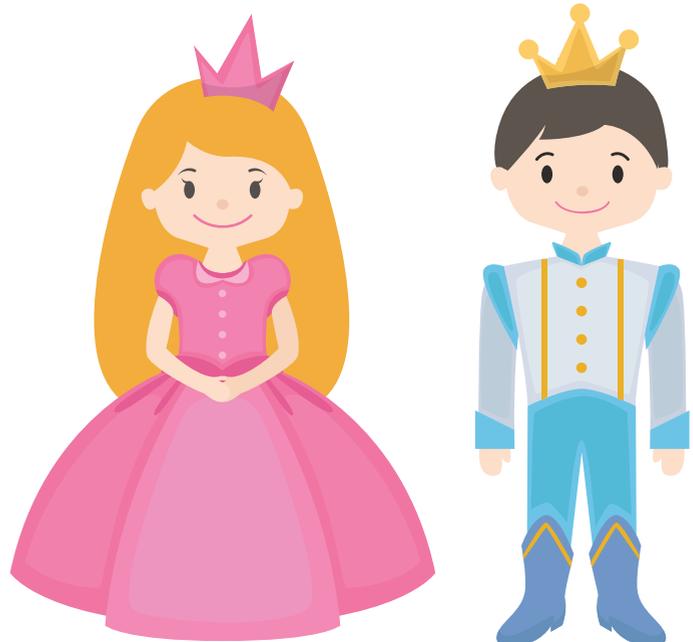
- Ask your parents to help you find a wipe-off marker.
- Write each word of these Bible verses on separate plastic building bricks (such as Legos).
- Then place the bricks in the right order to build a wall out of the verse. Hold the bricks carefully so you don't rub the words off before you start.
- Each time you read the verses aloud, rub off one or two more words until you have wiped off all the words and the bricks are clean. By that time you'll know these amazing verses by heart.
- If you don't have toy bricks or wipe-off markers, cut rectangles from paper or thin cardstock. Write one word on each rectangle, and lay them in order to make the Bible verses. Each time you read the verses, turn a few cards upside down. Repeat the verses until you can say them perfectly without seeing any words at all.



PRINCES AND PRINCESSES

You are a child of God, the King of the Universe! That makes you a prince or princess!

- Ask a grown-up to help you make a cardboard crown to wear.
- Write on the crown "I am a child of God." Then decorate the crown with stickers, gems, or markers.
- Wear your crown and do something kind for someone in your home, just like a heavenly prince or princess.
- Or make a sign to stick on your mirror or bedroom door to remind you that you're a child of God.
- What do you think the princes and princesses of heaven might do each day?





HEAVEN ON EARTH

Talk with your family about how wonderful heaven will be.

- What do you think you'll do in heaven? Plan a whole heavenly day together.
- What could you do as a family to make earth more like a little piece of heaven? Make a list of ideas and see how many you can do in a week.

PRAYER PICTURE

Whom would you like to see in heaven?

- Draw a picture of heaven. Include your family and any other people you especially want to see there.
- Gather your family in a circle around your picture and pray that each person in the picture will be in heaven.
- Keep your picture as a reminder to pray for the special people in your life.

IMAGINE . . .

Find a quiet place and imagine you're sitting on Jesus' lap, just like the children in the Bible. Imagine you're snuggling into His chest and He's hugging you and smiling at you and telling you amazing stories.

- What would you like to say to Jesus? What questions would you like to ask Him, and what would you most like to thank Him for?
- What do you think Jesus would like to say to you? "I love you!" "I made you special!" "I'm so glad you're My child!" What else might He say to encourage you? 7

Karen Holford writes from Scotland. She's looking forward to living with Jesus and learning even more about God's amazing love for us.



Dear Abigail,

My husband and I have been at our two-church district for six years, and we have been blessed serving in this community. However, I made the mistake when we first arrived at this church of taking on too many responsibilities way too quickly. I didn't know any better, and it seemed harmless at the time, but my duties increased more and more. Over the years, the members have come to expect things from me and have even become quite demanding.

When I do say no to something, I hear, "But you are the pastor's wife," as they smile. Honestly, I am burned out, frustrated, and overwhelmed. I feel as if my back is against a wall with no escape. I know it is my fault for getting into this mess, but where do I go from here?

*Sincerely,
I'm Not Superwoman*

Dear I'm Not Superwoman,

I recently heard a speaker share a sobering quote. He said, "If it isn't light, it isn't right." Simply meaning, most of us carry around more burdens than we should. It doesn't mean you are doing anything wrong; rather, it is just time to rearrange priorities and set some new boundaries. We've all been there at some point in ministry.

Take some time for a season of peace and solitude. You'll find no better way to start than with the comforting words of Jesus: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30, KJV).

Pray about sharing your concerns with the church leaders; write a letter if that is more comfortable for you. A common mistake that anyone can make is assuming that everything is okay when a person is silent on a particular subject. Voicing your current state of "burn-out" and your need to share responsibilities with others should help you make the necessary adjustments. My experience is that people will let you do all you are willing to take on. Be honest, and you will be pleasantly surprised at the support you receive.

Praying for you,
Abigail

FROM THE FIELD

South American Division

In October 2015, nearly 300 pastoral spouses gathered in Recife, Brazil, for fellowship, support, and spiritual growth. Five speakers presented seminars on subjects such as forming a relationship with Jesus, successful marriage, raising godly children, women's health, and how to minister to difficult members. Once every five years, the North East Union sponsors this retreat.



Pastoral spouses pose for a picture during a retreat packed with seminars and fellowship.

The General Conference

Special meetings for spouses of Annual Council delegates were held in October 2015. Kathy McKey shared her experience with evangelism and how God can do amazing things when we say "Yes!" to His call; Melody Mason shared the power of united prayer and led times of prayer that included requests by individuals; and Dr. Neil Nedley presented some new and interesting insights on our physical and emotional health.



Spouses of Annual Council delegates gather to pray together for individual requests.



Annual Council delegate spouses meet together.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Does God answer our prayers? Last year in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, spouses studied Scripture, shared times of discouragement and encouragement, and prayed together. At the event sponsored by Shepherdess and Women's Ministries, the women praised God for the experience. "God was so good to us during this camp, and we were blessed," said Collette Reith. They give all the glory to God.



Pastors' spouses encourage each other in Sri Lanka.



Join the

Evangelistic Outreach: Rwanda, Africa

May 13 - May 28, 2016

One Hundred Preachers Are Needed!

Two thousand churches in the beautiful country of Rwanda will be hosting meetings, and they are asking for 100 preachers to partner with them in this evangelistic thrust. Join Elder Ted Wilson, General Conference President, General Conference leaders, lay people from Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), as well as other lay people from around the world, to reach out to Rwanda.

Register at: www.tmi.adventist.org

- mckeyk@gc.adventist.org • 503.781.6512
- costan@gc.adventist.org • 301.680.6177

Pray for Rwanda. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."* Zechariah 4:6

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