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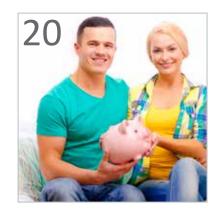


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## You Can Never Outgive God!

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Luke 6:38, NKJV

WE WERE AT CAMP MEETING. It was Sabbath morning, and I woke up arguing with God. "I could have married a rich surgeon! I think it is enough of a financial sacrifice to be married to a pastor."

We had an annual camp meeting evangelism offering, and the night before I had been impressed to ask the people to pray and ask God how much they should give. Then we had a time of silence while the congregation prayed.

God was after me to ask Him the same question. I was afraid. I didn't want to give more money than we had. I already knew the amount God was impressing me to give. "There is no way we can do this," I told God. "We don't even have that much money in our savings account."

When I opened my Bible, my eyes fell on a verse that shook me up. "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45, NKJV).

Later, Jerry asked, "How much is God telling you that we should give?" I said, "You don't want to know. You will just laugh at me." In the past, if I had told Jerry some new idea I had for giving to a worthy cause, he had just patted me on the shoulder and said, "We will think about it." End of conversation.

This time he didn't give up, so I told him, expecting uncontrollable laughter. Instead he said, "We must do it!" I passionately explained why we couldn't. "We don't have that kind of money. We can barely pay our bills."

Smiling, Jerry said, "We can sell our furniture." Nobody would want our old, hand-me-down furniture. He handed me the pledge envelope and told me to turn it in.

My son Zac weighed in. "Mommy, if God told you to give that amount, you should do it." I left crying and turned in the pledge with tears and trembling. I had no idea where we would get the money.

That was July. We had until the next June to pay it off. By March, our pledge was paid in full! God did amazing things, and the money came in many different ways. It was an incredible, life-changing experience for our whole family.

The next year, I knew God would not expect us to give that much money again. But this time when we asked God how much to give, He doubled the amount. In faith, we decided to do it. And again, God blessed with the money.

Yes, we had to make some sacrifices and changes in our family spending. But what a blessing it was for our family! I don't have space to share all the blessings that came our way—new furniture, cars, houses, and clothing—and all in incredible ways.

Instead of arguing over money, Jerry and I started to work together on how we could give more to God. It has been the biggest blessing to our marriage and to our sons.

I have limited God so many times. He has been teaching me to follow Him and showing that He will provide. If you are struggling with finances, I would encourage you to sit still and listen as you read the Bible. God will show you how to live life differently. The unknown can be scary. But you can never outgive God!

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

## Who Knows?

## THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION



HAVE YOU EVER ENDED a day in a daze and wondered, *Does anyone know*...

- how much energy a 2-year-old has?
- how many times I've said I'm sorry?
- what it took for me to get to the end of this day?
- what it feels like to be on demand 24/7?
- what it's like to be out of money? alone? bone weary? unappreciated?

In fact, does anyone know what my life is like?

God does. Ellen White wrote:
"The Lord is good. He is merciful
and tender-hearted. He is
acquainted with every one of His
children. He knows just what each
one of us is doing. He knows just
how much credit to give to each
one. Will you not lay down your
credit list and your condemnation
list, and leave God to do His own
work? You will be given the crown
of glory if you will attend to the

## "O Lord, You have searched me and You know me. That's why I trust You to lead me in the way everlasting!"

Psalm 139, paraphrased and condensed

work that God has given you" (Christian Service, p. 268).

### I DON'T KNOW

One of the little discoveries of my life has been to realize that there is so much I don't know. Not that I ever thought I knew everything. But the balance of what-I-think-I-know next to what-I-know-I-don't-know has tipped considerably over the years.

I clearly remember leaning against the front seat behind my dad in our rumbling Ford station wagon, my feet precariously balanced on the hump that helped me see where he was driving. At 5 years old, I was glowing with success that I could read the billboard towering over us at the red light. I announced to the whole family that I really didn't have to go to school because I'd learned how to read already—and that was enough knowledge to buy the food I needed.

### I KNOW HE KNOWS

That was years before computers, the information age, instant communication, Google, Wikipedia, and access to 4,000 volumes in one download of a library app. Now just mumble the words "I don't know," and someone nearby will begin tapping their iPhone to tell you what Google knows.

But the barrage of knowledge has also created an invitation to admit reality: "I don't know." And it's OK. It means that I'm limited. I'm still learning. I don't need to know everything. I will pass by

the mass of trivia and focus on what is important—and I will be more aware of how privileged I am to know Someone who knows everything.

And to my overinformed, overanxious world, I can testify, "He's the most important to know."

Kathie Lichtenwalter writes from Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon, where her husband is dean of the School of Theology and director of the Islamic and Arabic Studies Center. She also serves as liaison for the pastoral spouses in the Middle East and North Africa Union, where every day is an experience in depending more on the One who knows and who cares.

"I cannot read the purpose of God in my affliction, but He knows what is best, and I will commit my soul, body, and spirit to Him as unto my faithful Creator. 'For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day' (2 Timothy 1:12). If we educated and trained our souls to have more faith, more love, greater patience, and a more perfect trust in our heavenly Father, I know we would have more peace and happiness day by day as we pass through the conflicts of this life.

"The Lord is not pleased to have us fret and worry ourselves out of the arms of Jesus. More is needed of the quiet waiting and watching combined. We think unless we have feeling that we are not in the right track, and we keep looking within for some sign befitting the occasion; but the reckoning is not of feeling but of faith.

"When we comply with the written Word, according to our best knowledge, then we are to walk by faith, whether we feel any special gratification or not. We dishonor God when we show we do not trust Him after He has given us such wondrous evidences of His great love in giving His only-begotten Son Jesus to die, our sacrifice, that we may believe in Him, rest our hopes in Him, and trust in His Word without a question or doubt."

Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 242



AS A LITTLE GIRL, I HAD THREE conversations with God again and again:

- 1. "Dear God, I want to be a missionary and tell everyone about Jesus!"
- "Dear God, can I marry a pastor? It will be so much easier to tell everyone about Jesus."
- "Dear God, when I open my eyes, could you please, pretty please, make my doll come alive? I really want to be a mommy."

God answered my first request right away. Of course, I did need some training, so I practiced sharing Jesus with my dolls. Next I witnessed to my cousins, the kids on my street, and people at church outreach activities. Eventually God said, "Now it's time for you to go to another country," and my experience as a missionary in Kazakhstan was priceless.

Because I was just 4 years old when I prayed to marry a pastor, God wisely said "Wait." But then He kept saying "wait" and "wait" and "wait," and in the waiting I eventually forgot about my request. That is, until one wonderful day when I saw him walking toward me at the airport, so confident, so handsome . . . what a man! (It's a long, romantic story.) The point? God gave me my pastor—a perfect gift in His perfect time.

Since we were already past our 20s, Tony and I didn't want to wait for babies. But five unsuccessful months later, we went to the doctor and were told that this was never going to happen for us. "You should consider other options," they said.

We weren't too sad, though, because we both believed that God could help us have a baby anyway. After all, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37, KJV).

## "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord."

Psalm 113:9, KJV

Shortly after that news, we were preparing to travel and preach for evangelistic meetings. On the trip Tony looked at me one day during lunch and said, "I think you're pregnant."

When we got back home, I felt dizzy, couldn't eat tomatoes, and had other symptoms, so we went to the doctor. I still remember the look on his face when we told him why we were there. I think he felt sorry for us. But he kindly said, "OK, let's just start with a pregnancy test."

Fifteen minutes later he walked back into the room and exclaimed, "We are in the presence of God! You are pregnant. Only God can do this!"

God did it! We knew He could! We were so happy that after two days we just couldn't keep it to ourselves, so we told our family and friends. Everyone was thrilled for us, and our miracle baby was already loved by everyone. We chose a name, and Tony sang to my belly every day. The nausea, the sleepiness, the long appointments, drinking and retaining all that water before the ultrasound . . . I loved every second of it!

But then at one appointment, something wasn't right. The doctor's face was too serious. That day we heard the little heartbeat for the first—and the last—time. Baby AJ's little heart was already too weak to survive.

Why, Lord? I wondered. This baby was an answer to our prayers, a miracle . . . So why not complete the miracle?

Not a week after our loss, I found this quote: "When before the throne we stand in Him complete, all the riddles that puzzle us here will fall into place and we shall know in fulfillment what we now believe in faith—that all things work together for good in His eternal purpose. No longer will we cry 'My God, why?' Instead, 'alas' will become 'Alleluia,' all question marks will be straightened into exclamation points, sorrow will change to singing, and pain will be lost in praise."\*

Baby AJ went to sleep in Jesus in May 2010. A year later we went to camp meeting, and by day two my heart was already breaking. Friends and church members kept asking, "When are you going to have a baby?"

I kept smiling and saying, "God only knows." Then I would change the topic. It wasn't as if we weren't trying, or not wanting a child.

That Sabbath morning I sat alone in the main auditorium praying, Lord, there are seven more days to go. Give me strength, give me courage, give me peace. And somehow, some way, please give me a hug that lasts until the end of camp meeting.

Later I stopped by the children's division to see my nieces. All the parents were hugging their kids. There were kids everywhere. *Maybe it wasn't a qood idea to come here*, I thought.

I was turning to leave when a woman exclaimed, "Sayuri, where's your baby? I heard you were pregnant last year!"

I wanted to tell her we had lost our baby, but she just kept talking, and every innocent word felt like she was stabbing my heart. "Wait," she said suddenly, calling over two friends. "This is Sayuri, Pastor Tony's wife. Can you believe they didn't send me a birth announcement?"

Silence fell.

As I was trying to find words to respond, I heard a loud, childish voice. It was Marcos, a young boy from our church, running up with several other kids. "Hey, look," he told his friends, "that's my mom!" He made such a fuss that all his little friends gave me hugs too.

When I looked up, the nosy women were gone. They must have thought, *Wow, that baby grew up fast!* 

We still don't have a baby of our own. We don't know if we ever will. You may be thinking that God clearly answered my third prayer request with a *no*. But I refuse to say that we are childless, because one of the gifts of ministry is the chance to mentor many children. We may not be biological parents, but we have so many kids.

Early this year we wrote down the names of every child we pray for by name, and we were shocked to realize that we have more than 300 kids!

At a recent potluck a man asked if we have children, and someone interrupted him, saying, "They don't have any."

For the first time, I felt confident to respond, "Yes, actually we have 300. And many more on the way!"

Whether or not they were born to you, how many children do you have?

\* Robert J. Morgan, The Red Sea Rules, p. 103.

Sayuri Rodriguez is the happy wife of her best friend and pastor-husband, Tony. They serve at the Roseburg Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Oregon. She says that she enjoys spending her free time taking pictures, even without a camera!





### **DON'T FEAR SACRIFICE**

Sacrifice. It seems like a scary word, especially when you think of things you may have to give up when living on a pastor's budget. But don't fear. It may be true that at times you can't afford the same kind of home, car, vacation, and clothes as your friends and extended family members—but many things are worth far more than money and what money can buy!

If you're bringing in less income because you're staying home to raise your children, is that really a sacrifice? It may seem so monetarily, but the treasured time and enormous influence you can have on your children's lives is priceless!

Some think it is too great a sacrifice to set aside their own career in order to work alongside their pastor-spouse. However, the joys and benefits of partnering in ministry together, as well as the impact team ministry will have on your church (including the eternal rewards), far outweigh the money you could be earning.

Sacrifice can be tough. But blessings always follow when we sacrifice in the ways God calls us to. Jesus will be faithful to His promise in Mark 10:29, 30: "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (NKJV).

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: ministerialspouses@ministerialassociation.org

## Special Quotes

The Christian's Summer—"This earth is the place of preparation for heaven. The time spent here is the Christian's winter. Here the chilly winds of affliction blow upon us, and the waves of trouble roll against us. But in the near future, when Christ comes, sorrow and sighing will be forever ended. Then will be the Christian's summer. All trials will be over, and there will be no more sickness or death. 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying . . . for the former things are passed away.'"

Heaven, p. 60

"The Christian will be filled with joy in proportion as he is a faithful steward of his Lord's goods. Christ yearns to save every son and daughter of Adam. He lifts His voice in warning, in order to break the spell which has bound the soul in captivity to the slavery of sin. He beseeches men to turn from their infatuation. He brings the nobler world before their vision, and says, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth."

Counsels on Stewardship, pp. 136, 137

"When you are tempted to spend money for knickknacks, you should remember the self-denial and self-sacrifice that Christ endured to save fallen man. Our children should be taught to exercise self-denial and self-control. The reason so many ministers feel that they have a hard time in financial matters is that they do not bind about their tastes, their appetites and inclinations. The reason so many men become bankrupt and dishonestly appropriate means is because they seek to gratify the extravagant tastes of their wives and children. How careful should fathers and mothers be to teach economy by precept and example to their children!"

The Adventist Home, pp. 382, 383

## To Help Keep You Alive ... Drink When You Drive

WARNING: THIS INFORMATION MAY CHANGE YOUR LIFE

KEVIN SMITH WAS DRIVING home after a long day at work one evening when he was pulled over by a traffic officer. As the officer approached the driver's side window, Kevin leaned out and asked, "Officer, was I speeding?"

"Periodically, yes," replied the officer. "But I wonder, sir, have you been drinking alcohol today?"

"Why certainly not!" replied Kevin, a Seventh-day Adventist Church member in good standing and a committed advocate of healthful living. "Why do you ask?" he continued.

"Well, sir," stated the officer in a serious tone,
"I noticed that your car was drifting across lane
markers. At that last stop sign you failed to come to
a complete stop. You also made a turn into a busy
stream of traffic and narrowly missed being hit by
another vehicle. At times your speed exceeded the
posted limit, and I also noticed that you tended to
trail too close to the vehicle ahead of you as you
drove along. And now, sir, would you please step out
of your car and we will administer the sobriety test."
It was a surprise to the officer, but not to Kevin,

that the sobriety test indicated Kevin was not intoxicated. So the puzzling question was this: What caused Kevin to exhibit symptoms similar to driving while under the influence of alcohol?

### DID YOU KNOW . . .

People who drive while dehydrated make many of the same mistakes in judgment and are largely at the same risk of accident and injury as are individuals who drive drunk. Why is this?

### 1. We are water containers.

- Up to 60% of our body weight is made of water.
- The heart is approximately 73% water.
- The lungs are about 83% water.
- The skin is 64% water.
- Muscles and kidneys are 79% water.
- Even the bones are watery at 31%.

### 2. Water keeps our machinery working.

From our head to our feet, water plays a vital role in the overall function and health of the body. Here are a few facts concerning the importance of drinking enough water.

Saliva in our mouths begins the process of digestion, which carries food to the stomach and into the intestines. Without adequate hydration, the entire digestive system may be poorly lubricated, causing food to move through sluggishly and slowly. This results in problems along the way, including abdominal discomfort and the dreaded constipation. Inadequate moisture in the intestines can also hinder the body's ability to digest and effectively absorb water-soluble vitamins, minerals, and nutrients.

Water also aids in the elimination of toxins and wastes through the kidneys and liver. A reliable sign of adequate hydration in a healthy person is urine output that is slightly yellow to clear in color, as opposed to dark yellow. Keeping well hydrated can decrease the probability of gallbladder problems and the formation of kidney stones, as well as the occurrence of urinary tract infections.

With adequate hydration, blood can flow easily throughout the body, providing much-needed oxygen and nutrition. In a state of dehydration, the blood becomes thick and moves about more slowly. The heart has to pump harder in order to keep the circulation going. In time, the serious results can include a rise in blood pressure, risk of stroke, and diabetic complications. This harmful sluggishness of the circulatory system can precipitate the onset of heart disease in those who do not routinely hydrate themselves sufficiently.

Some other functions of water within the body:

- Lubricating the joints
- Regulating the body's temperature

- Acting as a shock absorber to the brain and spinal cord
- Keeping the skin (including the lips) moist and healthy
- Helping in the development of strong muscles
- Improving mental and physical performance

### **WATER YOUR BRAIN**

The intricate process of neuron communication within the brain—which makes up our thoughts, memory, decision-making, and reasoning ability—depends heavily on a liquid lubricant in order to successfully function. As the brain is about 83 percent water, the liquid needed is simply water. Without good hydration, thought processes can be slower. The brain has no way to store water, and dehydration results if all the water lost in a day is not replaced.

In a dehydrated state, it's harder to stay focused. Short-term memory can be compromised. Good judgment can be impaired, and reaction time becomes slower. Decision-making can be more challenging and learning ability dulled. An underhydrated brain can result in headaches, tiredness, irritability, and even depressed moods.







### LIFESTYLE

Is it any wonder, then, that a motor function such as driving, which relies on good judgment and alertness for skill and safety, can be adversely affected when one's brain is in a state of dehydration? Muscle function is also affected when the body is lacking sufficient water, resulting in slower response and weakness.

It is an unwritten law of road trips to use the restroom before leaving and then to drink very little along the way so frequent rest stops will not be necessary. As far as convenience goes, this can work well, but at what great risk?

By the same token, busy workdays make multiple demands on our time, and drinking enough water can be low on the priority list. Thus, in the case of Kevin Smith, even the drive from office to home can be seriously compromised due to dehydration.

We do our bodies a great favor by drinking enough water daily. Fruit juices, milk, coffee, tea, artificially sweetened flavored drinks, and soda, some of which can act as diuretics, are not adequate substitutes for plain, pure water.

Do you have trouble remembering to drink enough? These tips might help:

- Set a goal for the day and commit to it. If you are basically inside a building all day, aim for 8 to 10 glasses. If you live or work at high altitude or in heat, increase your intake accordingly. If you have questions about the amount of water you need, consult your physician.
- 2. Drink two full glasses of water first thing in the morning to start off right.
- 3. Invest in a water bottle. Mark it to remind you when and how much to drink.
- 4. Use a free app such as *Waterlogged* or *Daily Water* to help track, store, and analyze your water consumption.
- 5. Infuse your water with herbs or a refreshing combination such as cucumber slices and lemons to add to your water's taste and appeal.
- Get friends, family, or coworkers to join you. For example, make it a goal to drink at least five glasses during the workday. Then set up shared calendar reminders to make sure you're all on track. Celebrate the success.
- 7. Use a straw, and you'll drink more and faster.
- 8. Set an alarm or a reminder on your computer or phone.
- 9. Don't wait until you are thirsty, as this is an indication the body is already dehydrated.
- 10. When driving a distance, hydrate well before leaving, and then drink water along the way. Sure, you will have to stop more often, but your body will benefit from the movement and stretching.

### LIVING WATER

Just as we shouldn't neglect our body's need of water, so we must not neglect our daily need of Living Water. "Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life'" (John 4:13, 14, CEB).

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SECOND QUARTER 2016

Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years. She enjoys music, creative arts, cooking, and reading.

## Couple Fun

### 26 DATE IDEAS FOR (ALMOST) FREE





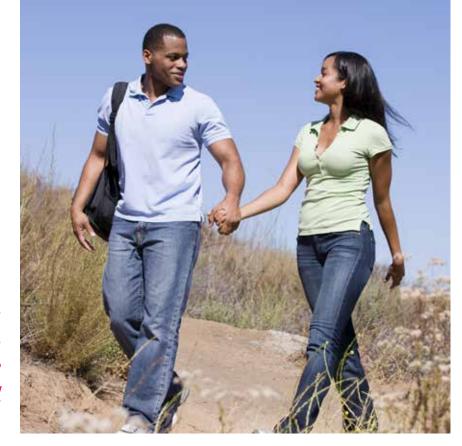


YOU MAY NOT HAVE much time, and you may not have much money, but here are a few ways to have fun with your spouse:

- Make healthy raw, nutty truffles together. Here's one recipe to try: https://liagriffith.com/food-loverfriday-paleo-chocolate-bliss-bites/.
- Cycle along an off-road bike track in the countryside or through a park.
   Borrow or hire bikes if you don't have your own.
- Try drawing each other's portraits or taking some fun photographs together.
- 4. Download a walking treasure hunt around a local town or a driving treasure hunt around your area. You can often purchase these online for a small price. If there isn't one available, why not go out together and create one for a church outing? Search online for some basic guidelines for making safe and fun treasure hunts.

- Meet up for lunch on a workday. Have a picnic in the park, try a local café, or take your sack lunch to a lunchtime concert.
- 6. Pop into a card shop and find three cards you'd like to send each other. Choose one with meaningful words, one that would make your spouse smile, and one other card that they might like to receive. You don't even have to buy the cards—just read them aloud to each other in the store.
- Learn something new together. Look for interesting, short workshops in your area that you'd both enjoy, such as spoon carving, furniture refinishing, or bookbinding.
- Take a rug, binoculars, and a flask of hot chocolate and lie out under the stars. Try doing this when it's not cold or raining and when there are shooting stars or other astronomical activities.
- Rent a boat and explore a small lake together. Take a picnic and a couple of good books. Relax.

### -Couple Fun



10. Go for a hike along a trail you've never visited before.

- Visit your local tourist information center and ask about any special events that are scheduled for your area.
- 12. Visit a local art gallery or art store and choose your three favorite pictures. Or look for all the pictures connected with Bible stories and see if the artwork gives you new perspectives on the stories.
- 13. Take turns reading an interesting book to each other.
- 14. Do something you enjoyed doing together before you were married.
- 15. Fly a kite, play crazy golf, jump on a trampoline, visit a zoo, or ride a quad bike and have a little adventure.
- 16. Spend a whole evening relaxing in your home—no TV, no screens, no talking about work—just the two of you enjoying closeness. Kiss, cuddle, take a long bath, light candles, and get an early night.

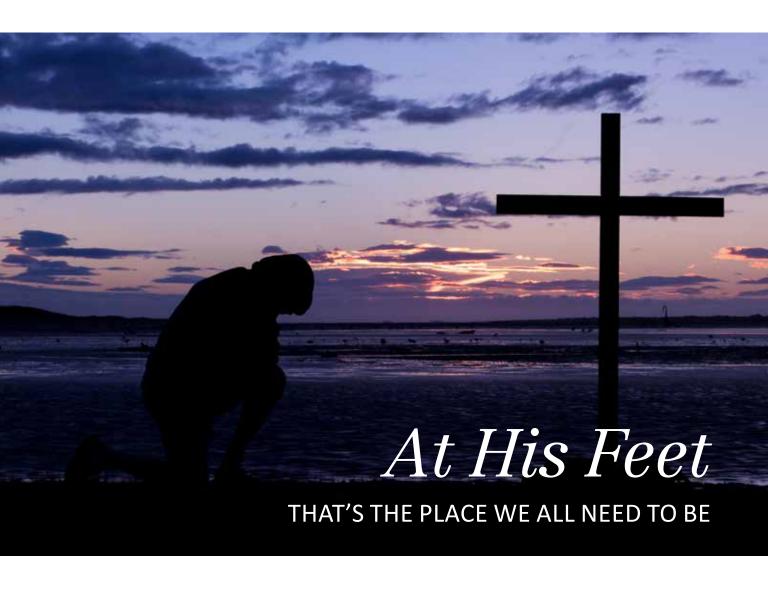
- 17. Search for the short YouTube clip about the Kindness Boomerang by a team called Life Vest Inside. Then go into town and walk around together, looking for people to help. Buy lunch for a homeless person and talk to them, give some money to a child for ice cream, or help a young mom with her kids. Remember the Kindness Boomerang—you have no idea where those acts of kindness will end.
- 18. Visit a garden center and choose a few plants for your garden. Plant them together.
- 19. Stay home, pour each other your favorite drinks, and light some candles. Put on some romantic music and take a half hour to write each other love letters. Then read them aloud to each other.
- Visit thrift stores in your area and find a couple of outfits to wear.



21. Restore a piece of old furniture together for your home.

- 22. Search the Web for some funny "Minute to Win It" games and try them out together. These might include: How many sticky notes can you stick on your partner in one minute using only one hand? How high can you build a tower with newspaper and sticky tape in one minute? How many dice or sugar cubes can you balance on a Popsicle (Iolly) stick placed in your mouth in one minute?
- 23. Tackle a challenging job together, such as clearing the garage or the attic.
  Listen to an interesting audiobook or music while you work. Reward yourselves by going out for dinner or ice cream.

- 24. Find a small gift bag for each of you. Then think of five things you'd like to give each other if you could. They don't have to be real things—they could be abstract ideas, and you could pop five things into the bag that represent the things you would like to give.
- 25. Walk through your home or your neighborhood. Take turns finding things to be thankful for in every room or along every few steps of your walk. Notice the joy and peace you feel when you're filled with gratitude.
- 26. Watch inspiring YouTube clips together. Explore such sites as www.gratefulness.org and www. ignitermedia.com, or watch clips of Christian humorists.



SHE SLIPS IN QUIETLY AND imperceptibly. The men gathered there for the party pay little attention to her. Thinking she's a servant taking care of the many needs, they keep their attention on the other guests and their host.

He's a well-known Pharisee. Though he's no longer an outcast because of the dreaded leprosy, he's still tagged "Simon the Leper." Perhaps he lives with that description as a reminder of his past.

Maybe that's also why Simon likes parties so much. He's experienced exile and loves celebrating his freedom. And this celebration is no exception. It's going to be the party to top all parties! He's invited Jesus and Lazarus, the man Jesus resurrected, figuring he'll have a fascinating story to tell.

The men recline at the table with their feet exposed and elbows planted on the table deep in conversation. No one notices the "woman who had lived a sinful life" as she makes her way to Jesus. She begins to weep—not out of some lovesick sentiment but because He didn't give up on her. In fact, He saved her life. He also changed it through His words of love and forgiveness: "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Mary doesn't care what anyone might think. There's no way she'll be stopped from doing the only thing she knows to show Him how much she loves Him. As she kneels beside Jesus, weeping, she kisses His feet, mixing the salt of her tears with the dust of His travels.

Lips that expertly kissed many men to entice now kiss the feet of one Man in humble gratitude. Her kisses, once filled with seduction, are now redeemed as kisses of adoration for her Savior. The unclean is now clean. And as there is no towel to dry His feet, she lets down her hair. She lovingly dries His feet in a gesture of compassion and love. Her lips and her hair—both symbols of her past life—are now restored in pure worship for the One who has saved her!

Next, Mary breaks open her alabaster box filled with pure nard. The real reason she came is to anoint. As fragrance fills the room, it catches the attention of everyone present. Watching her now, Simon has vulgar thoughts. Though he was the one to lead Mary into sin, he now condemns her and also Jesus for allowing her touch. The Greek word Simon uses is haptomi, meaning "of carnal intercourse with a woman."

But Jesus doesn't condemn him, either. Instead, He tells a story—a story of indebtedness and forgiveness—and Simon gets it. Somehow in his prideful, arrogant, sinful heart, a light flickers. He sees the vast difference between himself and Mary, and it isn't her sin. It's Christ's forgiveness!

Even though he was healed by Jesus, Simon doesn't know true repentance. Healing has only served to put him back in the circuit again. His is a pseudo faith wrapped up in outward show and inward pride. Judas and the other disciples react with indignation. All they see is a "sinful woman" and her waste. They don't see what Jesus sees. But He tells them, "Leave her alone! She has done what she could. She has done a beautiful thing that will be told whenever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world."

What a legacy! And it doesn't stop there. At the Passover supper, Jesus' feet go unwashed. And two days later He hangs on the cross, crying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" Yet the remnant of sweet perfume poured out with the depth of love lingers.

Gail McKenzie serves as women's ministries director and prayer coordinator for the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, a position she has held for more than 15 years. She lives in Madison, Tennessee, with her pastorhusband, Mike, and special needs son, Stephen. She currently teaches a Sabbath school class, has taught "How to Study the Bible" seminars, and has spoken for various women's retreats. She says that her salutation is always "At His feet," because "there is no other place I would rather be!"

### WHERE CAN YOU BE FOUND?

At: The place
His: The Person
Feet: The posture

AT: THE PLACE TO BE

Read: John 8:1-11

- Where did Mary find herself in relation to Jesus?
- Why did they condemn her?
- What role did the Pharisees place Jesus in?
- What and when have you felt condemnation?
- Who has accused you?
- What were the words of Jesus to Mary?

"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (verse 11, NKJV).

**Reflect:** Have you heard Jesus say those words to you? Explain.

Read: Revelation 12:10

- Who is our accuser?
- How often does he accuse?
- Was the accusation of the Pharisees legitimate?
- Is the accusation of the devil true of God's people?
- In John 8:10, what happened to her accusers?
- In Revelation 12:10 and 20:10, what happens to *the* accuser?

HIS: THE PERSON TO BE WITH

Read: Matthew 1:21

· What does the name "Jesus" mean?

**Discover:** "Jesus," or the Old Testament name "Joshua," literally means "Jehovah is salvation." Here are some terms for forgiveness in the Old Testament:

- Wiping out or blotting out the memory of sin.
- Covering or concealing the record of sin.
- Lifting up and removing sin.
- Passing by sin.
- Pardoning on the basis of a substitute.

Read: Luke 7:48

**Discover:** The word "forgiven" is in the *perfect, passive, indicative* tense.

- Perfect: an action completed in the past once and for all, not needing to be repeated.
  - Did Jesus say "It is not finished"? No!
- Passive: the subject is the recipient of the action.
  - You are the subject, just as Mary was.
- Indicative: a simple statement of fact.
   There is no question—it is fact!

Reflect: In the court system, there is a judgment known as "expungement." A story is told of a young man who spent a night in jail and received a felony record with a two-year probation judgment for theft of items taken from an abandoned house. Several years later his lawyer handed him papers of expungement. The young man was told that if he was ever called to court and asked if he had ever been arrested or had a record, he could truthfully testify "no." But what is the real truth? He had been arrested and he did have a record. But the good news was that his record had been "expunged." He didn't have to tell the awful truth about himself! His past was erased!

• What would you like to have erased from your past?

Read: Isaiah 1:18

This is a famous passage of Scripture framed in courtroom language. When it says, "Come, let us reason," it is a call to court.

 Are the accusations of Satan true about you?

**Discover:** The word used in Luke 7:48 is *aphesis,* which means "forgiveness or pardon of sins; letting them go as if they had never been committed."

**Explore:** Leviticus 25:31, 40; 27:24 The Year of Jubilee was the year in which all debts were forgiven.

Read: Luke 7:41, 42

Which debtor are you?

**Read**: Hebrews 11 (the faith chapter) and take note of all the stories "rewritten" without their sins recorded.

### Reflect:

- How has Jesus rewritten your story?
- Write a note of gratitude to Jesus for what He has done because you do not have to tell the truth about yourself!

### FEET: THE POSTURE TO BE IN

Charles Spurgeon said that "At His feet" is a "becoming posture." The root of the Hebrew word *regel* for "foot" implies "presence" and "holding dominion."

Read: Luke 10:39-42

- Where do we find Mary?
- What does Jesus say about Mary?
- What is the "better thing" she has done?

### Read: John 11

- Where do we find Mary? (verse 32)
- What does she say to Jesus?
- What was Jesus' response?

Read: John 12:3-7

- Where do we find Mary?
- · What does she do to show her love for Jesus?
- What is Jesus' response?

Read: John 19:25-27

- Where do we find Mary?
- How does Jesus demonstrate His love for His mother?
- What do you think Mary Magdalene may have been doing there?

Read: John 20:1-17

- Where do we find Mary?
- Whom is she searching for?
- What is Mary doing? (verse 11)
- What does she hear the supposed "gardener" say? (verse 16)
- Have you heard Jesus call your name?
- What does Mary automatically do? (verse 17)
- What does Jesus tell her to do?

Read: John 20:18

- Where do we find Mary?
- Whom has she told her "good news" to?
- What other New Testament woman went running to tell the men the good news she had heard? (John 4)

**Reflect:** Did you see it? Did you see that every encounter Mary has with Jesus finds her in the same position? How did Mary "become" a follower of Jesus? She was always "at His feet"! Where will you be found?

### REMEMBER WHERE WE FIND MARY

She . . .

was thrown at His feet in sin.

sat at His feet to listen.

grieved for her brother, Lazarus, at the feet of Jesus.

poured oil on His head and bathed His feet with her tears.

stood at the foot of the cross.

followed His body to the cold mountain sepulcher.

arrived first at the tomb.

was first to see Him after His resurrection and held on to His feet. proclaimed the risen Christ.

## Money, Money, Money . . .

### YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AT ODDS WITH YOUR SPOUSE ON THIS TOUGH TOPIC

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

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

it's easier to stuff them all in a garbage can and sit on the lid. Money is not just about paper and coins; it comes all tangled up with concepts of ownership, power, identity, and entitlement.

#### THE MEANING OF MONEY

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



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

### **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

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

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

### **QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS**

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

- How did my family talk about money and use their money?
- What wisdom did I learn from my family about saving money?

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

### Money, Money, Money . . .

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

### **FINANCIAL VALUES**

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

- Make a list of five to six values relating to your finances, and list them in order of priority.
   Encourage your spouse to do the same. Then share your lists, explaining what your values mean to you, where they've come from, and why you placed them in that order. Next develop a shared financial value list, discussing how you want to blend and prioritize your values as a couple. Use this value list to help you evaluate your spending and financial planning.
- Study biblical values connected to finances.
   Consider the ones below:
  - Prayer: Asking God to help you use His money wisely, and asking Him to heal the hurts and struggles connected with your use of money (Philippians 4:6, 7).
  - Faith: Believing that God will provide the things you need (Philippians 4:19).
  - *Trust:* Trusting Him with your tithe (Malachi 3:10).

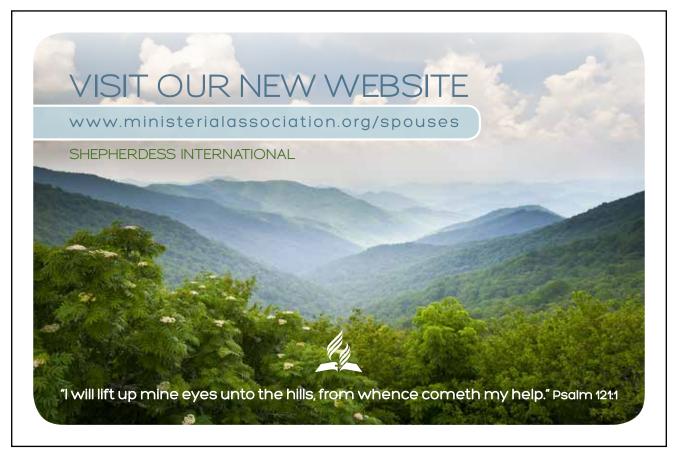


- Gratitude: Thanking God for your money, recognizing that every penny comes from His generous provision to you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- Stewardship: Providing wisely for the current and future needs of your family (Luke 16:10-12).
- Generosity: Giving generously to those who are in need or to bring joy to others (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).
- Honesty: Being open and transparent with each other about your financial challenges and spending (Matthew 5:37, Proverbs 19:1).
- Hospitality: Sharing the gifts of your food and home with others so that they can experience God's love and your care for them (Romans 12:13).
- Forgiveness: Forgiving yourself, and others, for past financial mistakes (Colossians 3:13).
- Patience: Being patient with each other when financial mistakes are made (1 Corinthians 13:4).
- Economy and resourcefulness: Using your resources wisely, including reusing and mending things rather than discarding and wasting them (John 6:12).
- Saving: Being willing to save and invest money wisely rather than spend it immediately (Proverbs 13:11, Matthew 25:27).
- Hard work: Doing your best at whatever you do, as though you're working for God (Colossians 3:23, 24).
- Sharing and lending: Helping others to save money by lending them the things they need and letting those things go (generously) if you don't get them back (Luke 6:35, 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

For more ideas and help, visit: http://www.nadministerial.org/article/1089/ family/sacred-family-circle/resources/at-homeresources/living-within-your-means

### **EXPERIMENTS TO TRY**

- For one month don't buy anything new unless it's absolutely essential, such as gas and food. Make do, mend, borrow, or buy from thrift stores and garage sales.
- For one month buy all your gas/petrol, food, clothes, and other essentials with cash.
   Paying for things with "real money" feels different because you have a clearer sense of
- how much you are spending than when you use a card. It's surprising how often you need to visit an ATM to top up your funds, or how many things you don't buy because you don't have enough cash on you.
- Whenever you want something new, write your wish in your diary for one month from today. In a month's time review your wish. Is it still something you want or need—or have you moved on?
- Keep a journal of your purchases for a month. List everything you buy, how much it cost, and why you bought it.
- Make a list of "treats" for yourselves that don't cost any money. Or "treat" yourselves by putting money into your savings account so you'll be able to do something wonderful in the future.





### Dear Abigail,

Several months have passed since the holiday season, and my credit card bills are flowing in to the mailbox. The festivities have faded and the gifts have been unwrapped—but staring me in the face are the charges that I recklessly mounted up in efforts to find those "perfect gifts" for everyone on my "list." Sadly, I gave myself a pep talk before I started shopping, but I got caught up in the frenzy and now feel so foolish. I really want to do better, but it seems that I keep digging a deeper financial hole that I can't get out of anytime soon. I feel so guilty and desperately need advice so I don't keep repeating this vicious cycle.

Sincerely,
Financially Frazzled



### Dear Financially Frazzled,

We often hear the phrase "Hindsight is 20/20." Too late we reflect on the steps we took to land us in troubling predicaments. But don't despair! This is the perfect opportunity to make strategic changes that will help you make better choices in life. Whether you're facing financial, health, or spiritual challenges, there is a providential plan in God's Word that gives us assurance that help is on the way: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14, 15, NIV).

From the sound of your letter, I have no doubt that you want to make the necessary changes to move on from the spending trap. First and most important, set aside a special time to pray the above promise from 1 John. The steps that need to be taken will surely be made evident to you as you seek God in this area of concern.

Next, consider getting advice from a biblical financial counselor. According to personal financial advisers, the average household charges \$1,300 on credit cards between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

I am also including a few practical tips that everyone can benefit from to avoid the credit card trap:

- 1. Avoid-last minute shopping. It's too tempting to swipe the plastic when you're in a crunch for a quick gift.
- 2. Make a list and stick to it. Also, set a budget and track your spending.
- 3. Don't shop at all! Be creative and make homemade gifts that will have a lot more meaning. Also, stores make everything look so beautiful at Christmastime, which tempts us to buy way more than we need. If we stay away from stores, we'll spend less.

As for the current debt you have accrued, pay it off as soon as possible. Always pay more than the minimum, and refrain from eating out and enjoying other luxuries until the balance is paid. As you think about next Christmas, consider opening a holiday savings plan now with your credit union or bank.

When you put these principles into practice, you and your family will be miles ahead for the next holiday season, as well as better managers of money all year long!

Sincerely, Abigail

## Money: A Gift From God

Ask your parents to help you find the following items:

- a tiny gift box or bag
  - a plain envelope
- three paper hearts
- 10 identical coins
  - marker pens



Place all 10 coins and one paper heart in the gift bag. This is a reminder that all of our money is a gift from God because He loves us.

Now take the coins out of the bag and place them in a line. Count them out from 1 to 10.

5

God gives us money to share with others or to help us do kind things for people. Take coin number 2 and place it on a paper heart. How will you use this money to help others? 6.

Eight coins are left for you. They are all gifts from God. How will you use them wisely? Why not save at least half of them for something important and special?

Take coin number 1 and put it in the envelope with one heart. This is your tithe to give back to God. Tithe is a special way to say "thank You" to God and show our love for Him. It also shows that we trust Him for everything we need. Decorate the envelope with the marker pens and write "Thank You, God!" on it. Your tithe money helps God's work around the world.

### DESIGN A COIN!



- Find some different coins and look at them. Whose head is on them? What pictures are on them? What messages are written on them?
- Draw two large circles on a sheet of paper. These represent the front and back of a coin. Now get creative and design both sides of a coin for God's kingdom.
- What pictures and words can you put on your coin to remind everyone that money is a gift from God?
- What can you put on the coin to remind people to help others with their money?
- Show your coin to others and explain the design.

### TITHE STORIES

Giving our tithe back to God is a special way to thank Him for everything He gives us. And when we tithe, God does something extra special with the rest of our money: somehow the 90 percent lasts longer or goes further.

- Ask people in your family and church to tell you about the wonderful things God has done because they've paid tithe. They will have some great stories to tell you about surprises and miracles!
- Write their stories in a notebook.
- Look for ways that God helps you to take care of your money and how He helps your parents when they pay tithe. Write them in your book too.



Money: A Gift From God

### HAPPY MONEY!

- Researchers have discovered that the happiest people are not those who want and have the most money, but those who give the most money away!
- Try putting some money in a charity box or buying a gift for someone needy (find ideas at adra.org/makea-difference/gift-catalog/). How did it feel to help someone?



### SHARING MONEY BOX

Make a box in which your family can save money for helping other people.

- Ask a grown-up for an empty food container with a plastic lid.
- Ask them to cut a slot in the plastic lid big enough to put money through.
- Glue white paper over the sides of the container. Then decorate your box with pictures of people who need help (cut them out of old magazines).

- Encourage everyone in your family to put some money in the box at least once a week, even if it's just a few pennies.
- Pray that your money will grow. Ask God to help you choose a caring project together. Use your money to buy chickens or seeds for a family overseas or toys for needy children in your town.



## CHEERFUL GIVER POSTER

- Read 2 Corinthians 9:7. It says, "God loves a cheerful giver."
- Talk with your family about this verse. Why is it sometimes hard to give cheerfully? What helps us to give cheerfully? Remembering our own blessings from God can help us want to give something back to Him.
- Make a poster or postcard with this verse on it as a reminder to give cheerfully.



# DESIGN YOUR OWN OFFERING ENVELOPES

Your church has special envelopes for tithes and offerings. Why not make some of your own?

- Find some plain envelopes and decorate them for your own tithes and offerings.
- You're giving some of your money back to God to say "thank You" for all the things He's given you, so make them really beautiful with markers and stickers.
- Next time you go to church, put your offering money in your special envelope.



Karen Holford is a pastor's wife in Scotland.

### East-Central Africa Division

In February 2016, Jerry and Janet Page traveled with Rwanda Union evangelism and prayer ministry coordinator Jean Baptiste Niyonzima all over the country of Rwanda. They held seven different prayer conferences as they helped prepare church leaders and members for the upcoming Rwanda evangelistic meetings. A total of 3,000 evangelistic meetings will be held simultaneously in May. Pastors and their spouses also attended the prayer conferences.



East Rwanda Field Shepherdesses



Central Rwanda Field Shepherdesses



South Rwanda Field Shepherdesses



North Rwanda Field Shepherdesses

### Southern Asia Division

In September 2015, pastors' spouses met in Hosur and were blessed to hear from former Shepherdess coordinators. In a special service, the retired Shepherdesses were recognized for their work with their husbands by having a shawl draped on their shoulders.

In Chennai, women met at the Chennai Metro Section compound in September. They enjoyed many presentations and a special excursion to the science exhibition and garden.

In October, pastors' spouses met in Goa and were encouraged to become more effective in their local churches. They enjoyed discussions, testimonies, and sundown worship at the beach.

Pastors' spouses met in Shillong at the Northeast India Union compound in October. The Shepherdesses were pleasantly surprised to find out that the Shepherdesses living at the compound were the cooks for the weekend. The food was very good!



Attendees in Hosur stand with former Southern Asia Division Shepherdess coordinators Rose Christo, Hepzibah Kore, Margaret Nathaniel, and Birol Christo.



Shepherdesses in Goa worshipped on the beach with Rose Christo, former SUD Shepherdess coordinator (kneeling on right), and Eshwaramma Peter, South-Central India Union Section Shepherdess coordinator (standing, front row right).



Pastors' spouses in Chennai met with Mrs. Jagatha, section Shepherdess leader; Rose Christo, former SUD Shepherdess coordinator; and Vijaya Arthur, union Shepherdess coordinator.



