

THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

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Marital Intimacy

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ON THE COVER

Marital intimacy is sometimes hard to talk about. But it's a gift from God and has a proper place in marriage. Learn what that is—and learn how to talk to your spouse and kids about God's ideal.



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God and the Marriage Bed

A SPEAKER AT A WOMEN'S retreat shared the following story. As she was waking up one morning, she could sense her husband stirring. He started rubbing her toes with his. *Oh no*, she thought. She knew what was coming and didn't want to have sex that morning.

She quickly slid out of bed onto her knees and started praying. She could sense her husband's disappointment. Suddenly she felt that God was very strongly telling her, "Get back in bed and love your husband!" Though not happy about it, later she was glad she did.

Marriage intimacy is an extravagant gift from God, designed for oneness and joy. Still, sometimes it is difficult to meet the needs of your spouse when you're tired or you have had a rough day or maybe you just don't like having sex.

God is interested in every area of our lives. He is the God of the impossible, and He can even help you experience joy in your intimate relations with your mate.

Years ago Jerry and I had just gotten into bed. I was so tired and just wanted to go to sleep. However, it was very obvious that my husband had other ideas. Lying on my side facing the other way, I was trying to quickly fall asleep. Suddenly I

heard a very loud thought in my mind: *Turn over now!* Shocked, I knew it was God. So I rolled over and was blessed. (Now, please don't misunderstand—my husband is never demanding on this.)

We cannot go wrong following what God tells us to do in every area of our lives. If we are spending daily time with God, reading His Word, we will recognize more and more His leading in our lives.

Too many times I have heard how spouses (both husbands and wives) withhold intimate relations to punish or control the other. Acknowledging her troubled marriage, one wife honestly admitted, "The problem is / only want to be intimate when I want to—not when he does. / want to control."

"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:3-5, NKJV).

You may not believe this or think it will matter. If you are struggling with sexual intimacy in your marriage, Jesus is the answer! Commit to a daily relationship with Him. Ask God to teach you how to abide in Him. Read God's Word, pray for God to make it meaningful to you, focus on Jesus' life, and earnestly pray about it. Ask God to help you understand and care about your spouse's needs. This will make a difference!

Now, what if the spouse is abusive and mean? That is another subject. I am not talking about abusive and mean men or women, just a normal marriage in which the man usually wants sex more often than the woman. But earnest prayer can change things with abusive husbands too.

"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).

In this journal you will find some excellent articles talking openly about intimacy in marriage. I pray that they will be helpful and you will be blessed. J

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Powerful Package

UNWRAP THE GIFT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU

THERE'S A LOT OF EMPHASIS on keeping healthy these days. We are encouraged to sleep more, exercise more, and eat lots of lentils, quinoa, and organic spinach rich with omega somethings!

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

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

Our God-shaped sexuality finds its best expression inside a safe and secure monogamous relationship between husband and wife.

That's Scriptural! It also receives an A grade when it's a mutual experience—one of shared reciprocity (1 Corinthians 7:5). It really reaches its zenith when it is an expression of love and respect, as Paul outlines in Ephesians 5:33.

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



Our sexuality came from God's heart and hands.

ON CALL

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

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

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

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

While the marriage may look to be in reasonable shape—the couple maintains all their usual ways of living and being a couple or family—inside they are lonely and hurting. It may only be a matter of time before the loneliness becomes too much for one or both partners and they drift away.

Emotional intimacy speaks to the very heart of a marriage. While a couple may find their physical relationship enjoyable, it is the emotional connection that keeps their marriage alive and vibrant and leads to a long-term relationship. Pastoral couples who wish to build and maintain a vibrant sexual relationship over the lifetime of their marriage will need to learn the language of emotions and how to be emotionally available to each other. They also need to learn to respond sensitively to each other’s emotional expressions and bids for attention and affection.

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

THANK GOD

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

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

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

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

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

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Better Beware!

CHECK OUT THESE SEVEN SEXUAL RISK FACTORS.

*“So God created man
in His own image;
in the image of God
He created him;
male and female He
created them.”*

Genesis 1:27, NKJV

GROWING UP IN AN ADVENTIST Christian home, I had godly parents who showed me by example what a Christian home should look like. They influenced me to integrate in my own personal life the principles and values that I still hold today.

Yet as I reminisce on my childhood, I don't recall my parents ever talking to me about sexuality. There was never a condemnation on the subject, nor a proactive awareness. My siblings and I had questions on this matter that went unanswered. We were subjected to the opinions of others, especially our peers, who shared their limited knowledge with warped theories and concepts.

The lack of proficiency on this subject from a godly perspective has impacted my life, as well as the lives of many others I know. Society has twisted the very core values and principles that God designed for us. This perverted misconception of sexuality is destroying our marriages, families, and churches.

HEALTHY SEXUALITY

What is so significant about sexuality and ministry? I believe healthy sexuality is a complete expression of love, commitment, devotion, and exclusiveness to that person to whom we say “I do.” This is what God intended it to be. Healthy sexuality affirms the Scriptures when it says, “And God saw that it was good.”



God created sexuality. It was part of His plan for us, as married couples, to enjoy this beautiful gift. However, sexual problems are present for a large number of couples today.

We should never assume that couples in ministry are immune to these issues. They are subjected to sexual challenges just like any human beings, and if the pastor is experiencing struggles in this area, it will inevitably impact his marriage, his family, and ultimately his church.

This area of sexuality in ministry varies from person to person, taking into account their ethnicity, upbringing, social background, personality, experiences, and connection with God. But regardless of the story behind each of us, there is one very important characteristic that all Christians should possess. It is called integrity.

I believe that integrity plays a vital role in our lives. It is an attribute highly esteemed by our Creator. “People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed” (Proverbs 10:9, NLT). Integrity expresses the innermost part of our soul. It is an expression of the heart. Integrity reflects the commitment to our core values, beliefs, moral principles, and honesty; it is integrated in the very fabric of our blueprint.

RISK FACTORS

It is important for every ministry couple to be aware of risk factors related to sexuality—not only for themselves but for those in their congregation. Here are seven:

1. Lonely and often friendless: Many pastors and their spouses would agree that in this line of work, even though people constantly surround them, they have a very lonely journey. Deep sharing with people in the church is often unwise and unhelpful for a pastor, so he keeps it to himself. He promotes and teaches how to reach out to those in the community, but often he does not experience “community” within his own personal circle. This isolation can lead to discouragement, anxiety, and high levels of stress.

Failing to connect well on a personal level, with either our spouse or a trusted friend, leaves us vulnerable to loneliness and exposes us to compromising our personal integrity. Often this isolation is conducive to a longing desire to be heard on an intimate level.

2. Position of power: Our spouses who are pastors are by default placed in a position that will make them vulnerable to sexual temptations. Being the leader of the church, someone who possesses authority and inspires respect right from the pulpit, enables pastors to have a great influence on the congregation. They are public figures, exposed to all the elements of church and ministry life.

This risk factor applies to all people who find themselves in positions of authority—teachers, CEOs, coaches, executives, Pathfinder leaders, and others. Their power can easily be misused or manipulated. If they are not careful, they can find themselves unsheltered and vulnerable to the enticement of others, especially those of the opposite gender.

3. The need for approval: Words of affirmation do wonders to the soul. There is nothing wrong with this, as long as we don’t allow compliments to get to our heads and become the motive behind what we do and how we do our job. When we find ourselves craving this affirmation and validation of our work outside the “safe range,” we could be opening a door for an emotional attachment to someone other than our spouse.

Better Beware!

4. Childhood trauma: This is a very sensitive area and has to be managed with professional care. Many times, these traumas can lead to vulnerability, exposing our inner pain and leaving us unprotected and at risk. Special attention and professional care should be given.



5. Bitterness and resentment: We will all experience disappointments and discouragement, which can leave us with unresolved resentments. When resentment and bitterness in ministry are met with marriage disputes and unresolved anger, the results can be disastrous. We can find ourselves in a risky position for sexual promiscuity. We might be left unguarded to a kind, affirmative, polite, and understanding church member who will not let an opportunity pass by. Resentment can also lead us to question our Christian calling.

6. Lack of accountability: Pastoral work is, by default, an isolated job. Pastors are their own bosses; they make their own appointments, and they structure their schedules to suit their work's demands. Usually, these tasks are carried out alone. It is here that they can easily confront circumstances that will test their integrity.

It is very important for all of us to have an accountability partner with whom we can share the highs and lows of life and ministry. It may be another nonjudgmental pastoral colleague, or even our own spouse. It is important to maintain open communication with honest transparency when confronted with issues of the heart.

7. Absence of boundaries: Physical boundaries provide us with fences that will ensure our safety. They give us an indication of how close we are getting to a prohibited area. The same thing happens when the pastor builds a mental and emotional safeguard or boundary around his ministry life. These boundaries will alert him when he is overstepping the line of safety, or when someone is conveying the wrong message. Boundaries will also bring balance to his personal life, his family, and his work environment.

A person who has well-established boundaries will identify more readily the signs of danger. These boundaries include time management, social time, taking time out, family time, connecting and checking in with spouse and colleagues, etc.

It is very clear that unfaithfulness to the marriage vows is an indication of sexual dysfunction, and yet how can we prevent this from happening? I can only repeat and claim the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8-13: "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. . . . For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (NLT). ■

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TIPS TO ~~SURVIVE~~ THRIVE

HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE

Seeing someone mistreat your spouse is one of the hardest things you might face in your life in ministry. False accusations, harsh comments, and undue criticism are hard enough to personally withstand, but the feelings of anger and resentment seem to magnify when you have to watch your spouse take the heat—especially when they didn't do anything to deserve it!

In times like this, we're reminded of Jesus' prayer in Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (NIV). This can be a hard prayer to pray when you're feeling angry, upset, and hurt. But we can make a choice to begin praying this prayer, and it's amazing how our feelings will begin to change.

It's been said that "hurt people hurt people." When we understand that those who are treating us or our spouse harshly or unfairly are just hurting people themselves, our compassion level increases, and we are able to pray for forgiveness for them. Think of Jesus—He definitely didn't deserve the comments, the beatings, the accusations, the crucifixion. But He looked on the very people who were putting Him to death and assumed the very best possible of them: "They do not know what they are doing."

Really? They didn't know they were spitting, whipping, and crucifying Jesus? They did. But Jesus recognized that they were deceived into believing that what they were doing was right. Jesus assumed the very best of others' motives and intentions, and when we do the same, we will find our hearts filled with the same incomprehensible compassion.

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: ministerialsouses@ministerialassociation.org

Special Quotes

"Not only does God require you to control your thoughts, but also your passions and affections. . . . Passion and affection are powerful agents. . . . Positively guard your thoughts, your passions, and your affections.

Do not degrade these to minister to lust. Elevate them [passions and affections] to purity, devote them to God."

Mind, Character, and Personality, pp. 218, 219

"The apostle [Peter] sought to teach the believers how important it is to keep the mind from wandering to forbidden themes or from spending its energies on trifling subjects. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentinelled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness."

The Adventist Home, p. 403

"None of us should be ashamed of work, however small and servile it may appear. Labor is ennobling. All who toil with head or hands are working men or working women. And all are doing their duty and honoring their religion as much while working at the washtub or washing dishes as they are in going to meeting. While the hands are engaged in the most common labor, the mind may be elevated and ennobled by pure and holy thoughts."

Child Guidance, p. 348



How to Talk to Your Kids About Sex

HERE'S HOW TO COVER THE WHEN, THE WHAT, THE WHERE, AND THE HOW.

OUR CHILDREN WILL INEVITABLY be confronted with sexual images both earlier and more often than we as parents would probably wish. Living in the United States, I had assumed that this was primarily an American problem. But in 1995 I took my family with me to Holland while I attended some meetings.

I decided that there are portions of Europe where society is even more oriented toward sex than in America. The whole time we were there, I was *constantly* covering the eyes of my then 9-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter.

One afternoon while walking around in Utrecht with my family, I noticed, to my horror, that there was a man who had "forgotten" to put on any clothes.

Since I was the first one in my family to spot this, uh, unusual event, I decided to try to discretely encourage my wife and children to walk in a different direction.

I almost made it, too, but *just* before we were out of view of this "Gentleman Godiva," my son said (loudly) to his sister, "Courtney, look!" (Isn't it amazing that your children *always* seem to see the things you *don't* want them to see, but they often *can't* see the things you want them to see?)

How do we give our children a healthy, Christian perspective of sex in a world where an unhealthy, un-Christian view seems to dominate?

AS A PARENT, YOU MUST HAVE A HEALTHY, CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE OF SEX.

You cannot give your children what you yourself do not have. Sex in its right context—involved a husband and a wife in a loving, healthy, happy relationship—is one of God's greatest gifts to

humans. If that is what you truly believe and that has been your blessed experience, then communicate that to your children.

Of course, that does not mean that your children actually want to *hear* that their parents have a happy, healthy sexual experience with each other. My experiences with young people (I was a youth director for 11 years) and with my own children have led me to believe that kids prefer to view their parents as nonsexual beings. Of course, the *truth* is that, with one very notable exception in Scripture, the only way that parents get to *be* parents in the *first* place is for them *not* to be nonsexual beings. The point is that there is nothing wrong with letting your children know (without going into personal details) that their parents have given sex, in its right context, their personal approval.

ALL CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX HAVE TO BE AGE-APPROPRIATE.

What you say to your 4-year-old is obviously not the same as what you say to your 14-year-old. You'll need to talk with your children about sex at three main intervals in their lives:

1. When they are toddlers, to answer their questions and to protect them against those who would seek to take advantage of them.

Obviously, when one is dealing with young children, the "sex education" should be somewhat limited. They should understand that their genital areas are not for random touching, either by others or themselves. You can also explain that babies grow inside their mothers' tummies. Of course, young children are curious and don't hesitate to ask *lots* of questions about whatever is on their minds. So to a large extent you'll know what to *tell* your toddlers based on what they *ask*.

But remember, whatever they ask must be answered honestly, even if the honest answer is "You are not quite old enough to understand that right now" or "Mommy [or Daddy] doesn't know how to answer that question right now." And whether or not they ask for it, you have to tell them *something* about inappropriate touching so they can protect themselves from child molestation.

2. As they enter the school years, to help them understand the miracle of human reproduction and to protect them against the misinformation of their friends.

You can be pretty certain that if you don't talk to your children about sex, one of their friends will. If that happens, instead of getting *information*, your child is more likely to get *misinformation*. The same is true if they are exposed to sexual topics or images in magazines or on the Internet. Use these early years to give them patient, truthful answers, and they will be more likely to seek your advice as they grow. Some parents start the conversation by reading their child simple books about God's plan for families and sex.

THE SEX TALK

WHAT MESSAGE SHOULD CHRISTIAN PARENTS GIVE THEIR KIDS?

If my wife and I were going through the child-rearing phase of our lives again and we were giving our children the Christian philosophy of sex, we would tell them what we told them the first time (and what we periodically remind them of now): The Christian, biblical view of sex is that there *is* no sex until there is a marriage between a man and a woman. In other words, relative to sex, until you say "I do," you *don't*.

Here are some texts in the Bible that shape the Christian philosophy of sex:

- Hebrews 13:4
- 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10
- 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
- 1 Corinthians 7:2
- Proverbs 6:24-33
- Proverbs 7

How to Talk to Your Kids About Sex

3. When they are teenagers, to protect them from, well, themselves.

About the time they begin to discover the opposite sex *and* have the opportunity to do something about what they have discovered, you need to talk to your children and help them understand that while sex in its proper context is a *wonderful* thing, when it is taken outside that context, sex is dangerous and (with the advent of AIDS) even deadly.

I recommend that, if possible, both parents talk to their children about sex. Men and women do not look at sex in exactly the same way, and it is good to have both "perspectives." I would further recommend that these particular talks be held separately, to make it easier on the

child to ask one parent those questions they might feel uncomfortable asking the parent of the other gender.

Ultimately, a discussion with your child about Christian sexuality is just another in a series of discussions that you as a parent need to have with your child about life in general. If an open line of communication has already been established between you and your child and you talk regularly, this conversation is not likely to be difficult.

If, on the other hand, you and your child do not communicate easily, I do not think it is ever too late to start trying. Ask God to help you begin that process today. J

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Plant Power

GROW SOME PLANTS, AND HARVEST SOME SURPRISES.

“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.”

—Alfred Austin



DO YOU HAVE STRESS?

Are you struggling with overwork and overweight?

Are you at risk for diabetes, heart disease, and exhaustion?

Do you find yourself feeling depressed, discouraged, or just plain burned out?

Are you overstretched and overbooked and wishing for time to recharge and regenerate?

There are a number of well-known and highly promoted stress-reducing therapies, including exercises, relaxation techniques, lifestyle changes, and counseling. However, one calming and fun alternative that has been a well-kept secret, receiving little promotion, is gardening.

Gardening offers important benefits—whether your garden is a small variety of herbs in a box on your patio, a backyard vegetable garden, or a plot in a community garden.

Ellen White wrote years ago about the life-giving benefits of being exposed to sunshine, getting fresh air, and tending to the growing things of nature. It is no coincidence that gardens aimed at interactive health and healing are becoming more the norm in schools, prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, and centers for the homeless or at-risk youth.

It turns out that the deep sense of well-being one can get from planting, watering, weeding, pruning, and harvesting isn't all in a person's head—although the head certainly benefits too! Here are some amazing benefits of gardening.

1. Gardening is a decompressor.

In a Dutch study, two groups of people were asked to complete a highly stressful project. Following this, one group was taken outside to participate in gardening for 30 minutes. The other group was to sit and read quietly for the same 30 minutes.

The gardening group not only reported improved moods but evidenced measurably lower cortisol levels. Cortisol is the stress hormone that, when chronically elevated, can be linked to lower immune function, obesity, memory and learning problems, and heart disease. Ellen White observed that when we are surrounded by the beautiful and peaceful things of nature, “relief will come to body and mind” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 265).

2. Gardening improves heart health.

Active gardening can be classified as moderate-intensity exercise. Digging, raking, lifting, and planting all contribute



“Nature is God’s physician. The pure air, the glad sunshine, the flowers and trees, the orchards and vineyards, and outdoor exercise amid these surroundings, are health-giving, life-giving.”

—Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 263, 264

to a total body workout, burning up to 330 calories during one hour of active gardening. It provides rewarding motivation—unlike the treadmill, which can be compared to a hamster on a wheel.

Most gardening is done during daylight hours, in the sunshine and fresh air. Sunlight exposure promotes the making of vitamin D within the body, an important protective agent against heart disease, osteoporosis, and several cancers. However, make sure not to expose the skin excessively to sunshine, which can result in sunburn damage and the risk of skin cancer over time.

3. Gardening lowers blood pressure.

The stress-reducing benefits of gardening can also have a positive effect on blood pressure, aiding in the stabilizing and lowering of it. This especially benefits those who struggle with hypertension.



4. Gardening provides an emotional lift.

Ask anyone who is involved in gardening if they find such an activity enjoyable, and you will see their eyes light up. You are sure to be regaled with stories of their gardening exploits.

Horticultural therapy is a relatively new field of study describing the benefits to anyone (especially patients with depression and other mental illnesses) who engages in a combination of physical activity, awareness of natural surroundings, cognitive stimulation, and satisfaction in productive work. The more

variety in the garden—such as the presence of food-producing plants, scented and colorful flowers, and a variety of shrubs and trees—the more nourishment to the senses.

Planting and watching a garden grow can fill a person with satisfaction and pride. It truly can become an enjoyable lifetime hobby, with the added bonus of positive mental, physical, and even spiritual benefits. The beauty and wonder of nature calls for a response of amazement at the creative power and design of our heavenly Father. Every bud and flower is an expression of His love and care for His children.

5. Gardening encourages improved eating habits.

People who grow their own fruit and vegetables tend to eat more healthfully. Produce from a home garden is usually free from harmful pesticides and is therefore a safer product. Besides that, vegetables and fruit picked fresh just taste better.

Children who garden generally have a better attitude toward healthful eating and find eating produce they grew themselves most enjoyable. Home gardeners also tend to be more adventurous about giving new foods a try.

HOW TO GET STARTED

You don’t need a degree in horticulture, a big backyard, or even a green thumb in order to begin gardening. If space is limited, try gardening in containers. You can grow cherry tomatoes in nothing more than a five-gallon bucket or pot that has some holes in the bottom.

Plant some herbs in an attractive container on your porch or kitchen windowsill. The Web is an available information source, as is your local bookstore. For some really good gardening tips, just start up a conversation with one of your gardening friends, or with someone you may meet in a garden-supply store. Most will happily share their gardening knowledge. J

INFORMATION SOURCES:

eartheasy.com

www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/07/08/why.gardening.good/
The Lost Art of Thinking, Neil Nedley, M.D., Nedley Publishing, p. 229
The Ministry of Healing, Ellen White, Pacific Press, Ch. 19, “In Contact With Nature”

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.

Cool to Be Kind

AMAZING KINDNESS

Hey, there! Did you know it's really cool to be kind? When people are asked whom they want to be friends with, or whom they want to marry, they usually want someone who is really kind to them.

Kindness is also a great way to be happy! One of the best ways to help sad people feel better is to encourage them to do something kind for someone else. It's also one of the best ways to share God's love with the people around us.



BIBLE VERSES ABOUT KINDNESS

Choose your favorite verse about kindness and memorize it. Write each word of the verse on a separate paper heart. Then arrange the word hearts in the correct order and stick them onto a sheet of paper. Here are some verses to choose from:

Matthew 5:40-44

Luke 10:27

Romans 12:9-21

1 Corinthians 13:4

Galatians 5:22, 23

Ephesians 4:32

MAKE A POSTER

Design a poster that encourages people to do kind things. Ask if you can make posters to put up at church, at school, or in your local library. Design one to encourage your family to do kind things for each other and your neighbors.



REMOVE THESE PAGES FOR CHILDREN



Cool to Be Kind

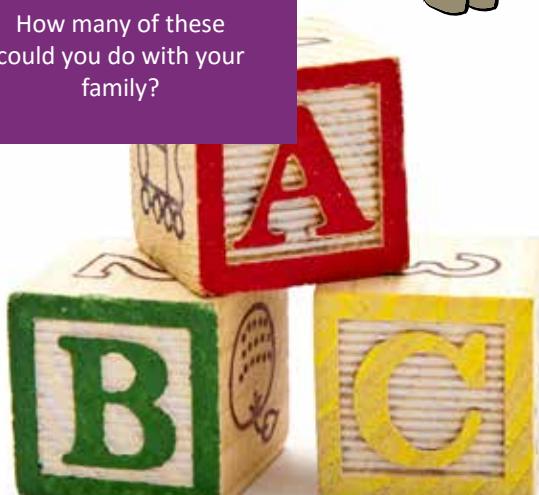
THE KINDEST PERSON EVER

Jesus was the kindest person who ever lived.

He spent every day being kind to people to show them how much God loved them. Jesus probably spent much more time doing kind things than He spent preaching. Often just being kind is a great way to be a witness for Jesus.

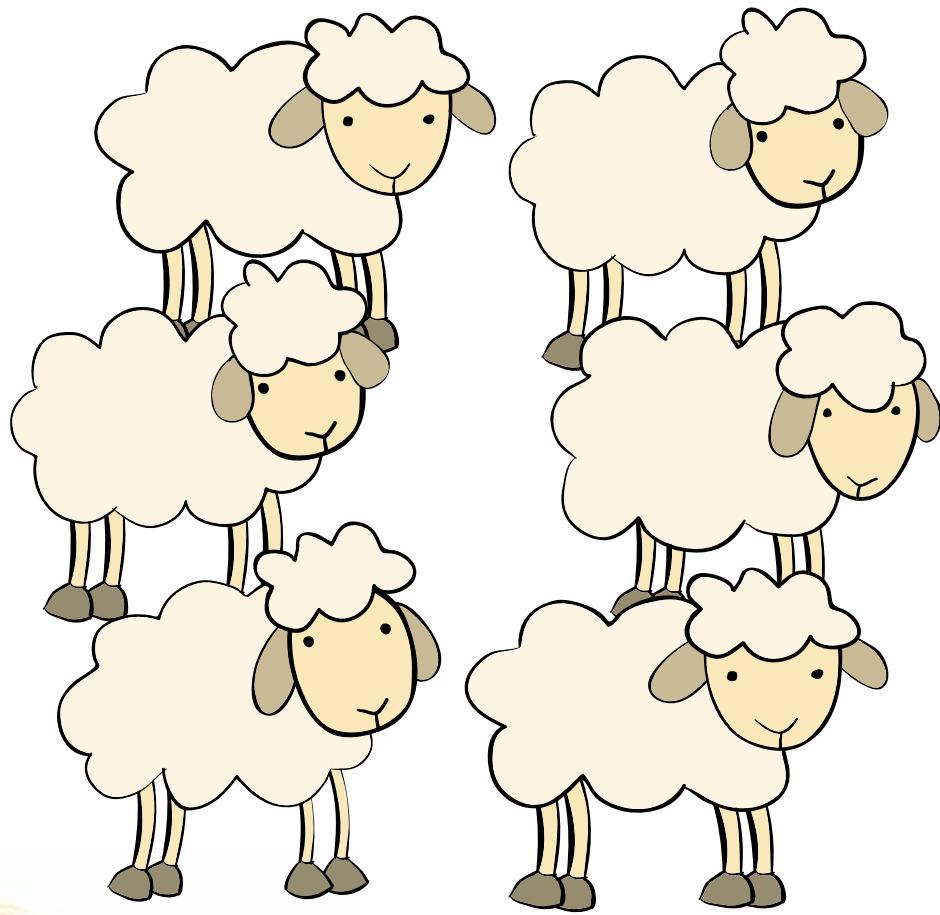
With your family, make a long list of all the different things Jesus did to show kindness, such as feeding hungry people, helping people to feel happy, welcoming little children, etc.

How many of these could you do with your family?



SHEEP AND GOATS

Jesus told a parable about the sheep and the goats. The sheep represented the people who did kind things for others. Read Matthew 25:31-46 and find out what the sheep/people did. Write each way they were kind on one of the sheep below.



ABCs OF KINDNESS

Make an ABCs of kindness with your family. Write all the letters of the alphabet down the side of a sheet of paper. Then think of at least one way you can show kindness beginning with each letter. A—Ask people how you can help them; B—Bake a cake or loaf of bread and give it to someone; C—Card (design a beautiful card to brighten someone's day); D—Drink (make a refreshing drink for someone); etc.



PICTURE IT!

Sometimes even tiny kindnesses can make a big difference. Once, when I was thousands of miles away from home on my birthday, someone left a little doughnut with a tiny candle in it on my doorstep. I've had lots of birthdays since then, but I've never forgotten that lovely little birthday doughnut.

Think about a time when someone was really kind to you. What did they do that was so special?

Invite everyone in your family to draw a picture of a time when someone was kind to them. Then show your pictures and tell your stories.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Read Matthew 22:38, 39. Draw a map of your neighborhood or apartment block. Who are your 10 nearest neighbors? Talk with your family about how you could be kind to these 10 neighbors.

Walk around the area and pray for your neighbors as you pass their homes. Ask God to help you know what kind of kindness they need most. And then do it.

You could bake cookies to share, make fruit baskets, sweep the sidewalk, mow their grass, give them bunches of flowers, or share your garden produce. Or perhaps you could invite them over for supper. Every time you do something kind for them, you are showing them God's love.



KINDNESS STARTS AT HOME

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4. The best way to develop your kindness muscles is to be kind at home. There are lots of ways you can be kind in your family.

Use a large sheet of paper and draw a big plan of your house. Then choose one room at a time and draw pictures or write lists of all the ways you could be kind in the kitchen, the family room, the hall, the bathroom, your bedroom, the yard, etc. Walk around your home and do one kind thing in each room.

MATCH THE KINDNESS!

Match the Bible characters below to the kind things they did. Then search for their stories in the Bible. Can you think of other people who were kind too?

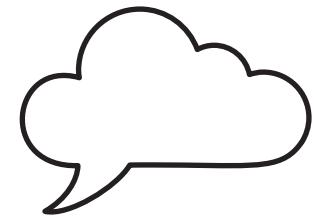
Rebekah	Shared her last loaf of bread
Dorcas	Packed a feast for David's hungry soldiers
Onesimus	Built a guest room for a visiting prophet
Abraham	Poured gallons of water for a herd of thirsty camels
Shunamite Woman	Made clothes for widows and orphans
Abigail	Visited Paul when he was in prison
Mary and Martha	Made a meal for passing travelers
Widow of Zarephath	Poured perfume on Jesus' feet
Mary	Cared for Jesus and His disciples

Cool to Be Kind



Read Colossians 3:23. Draw around your hands and then write a different way to be kind on each of your fingers. If you have little hands, draw around the hand of an adult so you have more space to write.

Add your favorite Bible verse about kindness. Put your picture where it will remind you to do kind things with your hands every day.



KIND WORDS

Read Ephesians 4:29. Our kind words can make a big difference! We can use our words to say we're sorry, to comfort people who are sad, to make people smile, to encourage people who are tired, to say thank you when people help us, and to ask people how we can help them best.

Draw a huge speech bubble, and fill it with kind things you could say to those around you.

ONE LITTLE CHURCH

A village church in Congresbury, England, celebrated its 800th anniversary by collecting 800 acts of kindness. They asked people to fill in a card saying when and how someone was kind to them. People deposited their cards in a little mailbox in the church.

This project made a big difference to their village, and other towns are trying this too. Maybe your church could do something like this.*

LOTS OF KINDNESS IDEAS



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS BIRTHDAY

When we do something kind for someone we don't know, it's often called a "random act of kindness." One family chooses to spend their birthdays doing random acts of kindness.

When Jake was 10, they did 10 acts of kindness together, and when Gemma was 12, they did 12 kind things. The children plan their acts of kindness, and their parents help them. They did kind things such as taping dollar bills to some toys in a dollar store, visiting the loneliest person in a senior care home, buying food for a homeless shelter, giving away bottles of water in the local park, and baking cookies to take to the fire station.

How old will you be on your next birthday? Why not plan a special day of kindness and see how much fun it is to make other people happy?

Check out this Web site: www.lifevestinside.com. It has a wonderful video you can watch called "Kindness Boomerang." You can also sign up for their daily email. It sends you lots of ideas for being kind, as well as short video clips about people being especially kind. You can also find lots more ideas at: www.randomactsofkindness.org/ kindness-ideas

* [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newtopics/howaboutthat/12087318/UK-kindest-village-Congresbury-north-Somerset-800-random-acts-of-generosity.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/howaboutthat/12087318/UK-kindest-village-Congresbury-north-Somerset-800-random-acts-of-generosity.html)

Karen Holford is married to Pastor Bernie Holford, and she is the Family Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division.

Making (1 Corinthians 13) Love

GOD GAVE YOU AN AMAZING WEDDING GIFT!

AFTER MORE THAN 30 YEARS of marriage, three children, three grandchildren, 12 years serving in family ministries, and two master's degrees in family therapy, Bernie and I can honestly say that one of the most challenging aspects of our marriage has been our physical intimacy. All around us there are distorted messages about our sexuality and extremely unhelpful "advice" and role models. So it's not surprising that we feel bewildered, vulnerable, and confused about our sexual intimacy.

Over the years we've read books, attended marriage retreats, and even answered

challenging questions about sexuality in our own seminars. For a while we thought the Bible was relatively quiet on the subject, apart from the exuberant poetry of the Song of Songs. Then one day we were inspired to apply the concepts of love in 1 Corinthians 13 to our sexual intimacy. We soon discovered that this famous love chapter is packed with amazing principles that can infuse our human lovemaking and make it the amazing wedding gift that God designed for us.



Making (1 Corinthians 13) Love

LOVE IS PATIENT.

It's interesting that Paul chooses patience as the first principle in his poetic description of love. At first glance, patience seems like an odd choice; why not kindness, or forgiveness? But patience blends together a whole collection of loving virtues.

Patience with our partner comes from a deep respect for their needs and preferences. Patience is a way to be kind, thoughtful, humble, unselfish, and self-controlled. When someone is impatient with us, we often feel sad, lonely, frustrated, misunderstood, embarrassed, pressured, and inadequate. Instead of drawing us closer to each other, those negative feelings push us further apart.

Patience is an important ingredient of lovemaking. Patience is about putting the other person's needs before our own and waiting warmly and patiently for the other person to be ready. Patience keeps us from being irritated or frustrated with each other, especially when our relationship is facing challenges.

LOVE CARES MORE FOR OTHERS THAN FOR SELF.

Lovemaking works best when the husband and wife are both focused on giving each other a loving, comfortable, and happy experience. What makes my partner feel happy and loved is more important than what makes me feel good. Everyday unselfishness—doing things to support, encourage, and appreciate each other—naturally helps us to feel more loving and close to each other.

LOVE DOESN'T WANT WHAT IT DOESN'T HAVE.

Love is content with what it has. Love is faithful. Love doesn't fantasize about other partners, or desire experiences that our partner finds unappealing or uncomfortable. Love focuses on making the marriage relationship the best it can be so that both of you are content with the love you share together.

LOVE ISN'T PROUD OR PUFFED UP.

Love isn't bossy or boastful about its achievements. Love has a humble and serving heart. It doesn't make love to enhance its own ego, but aims to make love in ways that build up the other person.

LOVE DOESN'T FORCE ITSELF ON OTHERS.

If there's one thing that's definitely incompatible with love, it's using force, guilt, abuse, or pressure to make your partner do whatever you want—especially when they are reluctant, or they just don't want to.

Sometimes it helps if you both make a list of the things that you enjoy sexually. Then swap your lists and let your husband or wife choose the things on your list that they'd most like to do for you. That way you can make your preferences clear, and still leave space for your partner to choose what they feel most comfortable doing for you.

LOVE ISN'T "ME FIRST."

In true lovemaking the other person's pleasure is more important than our own. When each partner's goal is to make the other person feel special and loved, then the whole experience tends to work better.

Author and speaker Mark Gungor's secret for successful lovemaking is being kind to his wife. He discovered that the kinder and more helpful he is, the closer she feels to him. His thoughtful care invites her loving response. Everyday kindness and loving attention paves the way for deeper sexual intimacy.

LOVE DOESN'T FLY OFF THE HANDLE.

Lovemaking doesn't always go according to plan. It's a complicated process, especially for women, whose bodies can respond in completely different ways each time.

When things don't work out, try exploring other ways to soothe and pleasure each other, rather than getting angry or rejecting each other. Try a gentle back massage, a

close cuddle, or kissing each other's bodies. Or look at the funny side and have a tickle and a giggle to help you both relax again.

LOVE DOESN'T KEEP SCORE OF THE SINS OF OTHERS.

Love doesn't hold back to punish the other person. Lovemaking is a powerful way to be a channel of God's love and grace to your partner. When forgiveness is difficult, and trust has been broken in painful ways, pray for the Holy Spirit to heal the pain and bring you close again.

LOVE DOESN'T REVEL WHEN OTHERS GROVEL.

Loving intimacy is something that lifts you both up. It doesn't humiliate or debase the other person, and it doesn't beg or manipulate. Love enjoys celebrating and honoring each other. What could you do to celebrate and honor your spouse?

LOVE TAKES PLEASURE IN THE FLOWERING OF TRUTH.

It isn't always easy to be lovingly honest with each other about our lovemaking experiences, because it's such a sensitive and vulnerable area of our relationship. But it can be helpful to tell each other, "I really like it when you . . ." or "It feels nice when you . . ."

LOVE PUTS UP WITH ANYTHING.

All kinds of life experiences and health challenges can have a profound effect on our intimate relationships. Pregnancy, tiredness, small children, illness, feeling sad, or being overwhelmed by work are just a few of the things that can disrupt our lovemaking. But love patiently and kindly supports each other through the challenges and looks for fresh ways to show care and be intimate with each other.

LOVE MEANS TRUSTING GOD ALWAYS.

God cares about your marriage and wants it to be the best it can be. He wants to bless you both through your sexual intimacy. But sometimes we hit roadblocks and challenges, and then it's worth going for help as soon as you can. Or try reading a book such as *Rekindling Desire* by Barry and Emily McCarthy.

LOVE ALWAYS LOOKS FOR THE BEST.

If something doesn't work out as you hoped, believe the best about your partner and yourself. And after you make love, don't forget to thank each other. Find a way to tell each other the best part of the experience for you so that you can learn about each other's preferences and grow into deeper intimacy.

LOVE NEVER LOOKS BACK.

Rather than regretting the mistakes of the past, or yearning for what used to be, love looks forward to new possibilities for intimacy. Take time to list and share three hopes for your intimate relationship, and work together to make them happen. Try some of the free printables and ideas at www.thedatingdivas.com, a Web site run by Christian women who are devoted to improving marriages with creative ideas for dates and intimate experiences.

LOVE KEEPS GOING TO THE END.

Love finds ways to pleasure the other person, even when your bodies are transformed into silvery seniority. Many older couples continue to enjoy their ever-changing journey into their God-given and mutually delightful intimacy.

LOVE NEVER DIES.

But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that moment: trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

J

Karen Holford is the director of Family Ministries for the Trans-European Division. She has been married to Bernie for nearly 33 years.

Long Days, Short Years

ARE YOU CAUGHT IN THIS TIME WARP?

NOT LONG AGO I HEARD an expression that really made me stop and think. Here it is: "The days are long. The years are short."

When I first heard these words, I was puzzled by their meaning. "The days are long. The years are short." How could days be long and years short? But now not only do I think I know what the expression means, but I am living it!

Our "baby" is away in school at academy. Our daughter is working independently in a distant state and city. The years when they were little and I tucked them into their beds at night are now long ago and far away.

Where did those days go?

- Days of toting diaper and Sabbath bags to church
- Days of delivering forgotten lunch bags and backpacks to school



In God's time “this too shall pass.”

- Days of campouts in our family tent
- Days of family worships with felt boards and songs accompanied by hand motions

Long days. Short years.

BYE-BYE

Yes, there were some long days when they were young. Days that involved hospital stays and learning life's tougher lessons that every child and every parent has to learn and relearn.

And now that all of our children are nearly grown, there are still some “long” days. They are long simply because of the challenges of living in an imperfect world—challenges such as:

- The realization that we're living in aging bodies
- The common pressures of pressing bills and never-ending obligations
- The need to brace ourselves for each passing year, knowing that together with the good, it will bring its own set of unique challenges

How about you? Are you occasionally experiencing a “long day” that seems like it will never end? How about moments when you realize how very quickly the “good years” have gone by and everything is different now?

Yes, the years *are* short. And yes, there are days that can be *very long*. But maybe it is well to remember that whether we are in the midst of young motherhood, or midlife, or postretirement, we can choose to

take a deep breath and recognize that, together with the problems, every stage in life is full of unique blessings and a deepened understanding of God's leading and presence in our lives.

Maybe one of the insights suggested in these thoughts is to savor the moments. Shall we give another hug, read another story, drink another cup of hot tea, go on another date, put on some music, and sit and be still?

Wouldn't it be wise for all of us to look for the good in every passing day and in every life event, even when it feels like we're just enduring a difficult trial? Perhaps we need to be reminded in the worst of times that given “some” amount of time, those tough moments will become only a memory. In God's time “this too shall pass.”

Someone once said that “time is the stuff of life,” and in the end, all of our lives will simply be made up of the moments that, all strung together, will define our lives.

Why not seize each and every moment, hold onto the good, and know that God will very soon move you past the bad? Ellen White once offered the insight that when we are safely home with Jesus, we will realize that in every moment God led us through both the good and the bad. And from the perspective of eternity, we would have it no other way than to have lived some short years and some long days! ■

Malinda Haley is a pastor's wife, the mother of three grown children, a maternal/infant nurse, and, above all, His humble servant. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, Steve, who is president of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference.

Have you ever felt too tired for intimacy?

DEAR FRIEND,

One night when my husband, Fred, wanted to make love, I moaned inside, *Not again already!* I felt put out, so I managed to say, "OK, I can put up with a quickie for your sake, but let's hurry. I'm tired and want to go to sleep."

Fred took a deep bow and said, "Thank you, O great and noble martyr!"

As I recall, things slid downhill quickly from there.

That week I wondered if these halfhearted, short experiences with me were fulfilling for him. While women draw intimacy from their mates primarily through sharing, hugging, and talking, I've learned that men draw intimacy from the sex act itself.

Mulling this over, I reversed the scene in my mind. What if Fred reacted to my need for sharing and hugging in the way I'd been reacting to him? What if he said, "I'm only in the mood once or twice a month to give you a hug and talk to you in any meaningful way, but I can give you a quickie talk before I fall asleep."

The light popped on in my head. These two situations are exactly the same, but because of the gender differences, men aren't nearly as concerned about hugs as they are about sex, and women aren't nearly as concerned about sex as they are about hugs. We can't expect our husbands to get interested in hugs if we don't get interested in intercourse.

SHOCKING

Initially, in my early years of marriage, I was shocked by male sexuality, especially by its visual orientations and its regularity. Male sexuality seemed rather shallow and almost weird to me, but I started to wonder about that. I discovered that it really isn't shallow. It's just different.

And given the obvious struggle men have with sexual purity when they're without sex, I began to understand why God would tell me, "Your body is not your own." I can see where at times sex is vital to Fred's purity and his emotional intimacy with me. And I can really help him out. In fact, God expects me to do it.

While we're quick to expect our husbands to toe God's line of sexual purity, we're often slow to toe His other line and admit that our bodies aren't our own. We have no right to expect our husbands to stay sexually pure if we constantly pull away. We're their sole vessels of sexual satisfaction, and guys need regular sexual fulfillment two or three times a week.

A friend of mine, Cindy, related her husband's observation that she had all the power in their sexual relationship, every speck of it. Every single time, he was the one who locked the door and asked for it. She, on the other hand, was always either freezing or tired.

"I know you have no real interest," he said to her. "But it's tough knowing that 90 percent of the time when we have sex, you can't even pretend to find me desirable. All you understand is that I need something you don't need, and you're simply doing it out of duty. When you don't show any true desire or passion on your own, I start feeling like a little boy depending on Mommy to give me my candy."

MOOD MADNESS

Mood should have nothing to do with it.

We're called to help out, whether we're in the mood or not. Countless times I've initiated sex with Fred when we both knew I wasn't in the mood.

Every night when Fred comes into the bedroom, he sits in his "talking chair" to make sure he doesn't fall asleep before I have a chance to talk with him. That means so much to me, especially since I know Fred is never in the mood for talking at that time of night. He's a morning person, so he's really tired when we go to bed, but he converses with me because he knows I need it, whether he's in the mood or not.

If your husband is like most guys, he goes to work at his job when he isn't in the mood, at least 50 percent of the time. I know that if it weren't for the kids and me, Fred would choose a different path for his life. How often am I tired at the end of the day, and Fred cleans the kitchen so I can sit and read a book? How often does he play Nintendo to draw the kids out of my hair for a break? (He hates Nintendo. He doesn't know what he's doing and always gets slaughtered, even by 9-year-old Michael.)

Can't we do the same for our husbands when we aren't in the mood? Besides, moods are a funny thing. Moods change quickly. Remember, part of our own intimacy is based on hugging and touching. I've found that if I submit and go ahead with things for his sake, more often than not all the touching and caressing changes my mood, and soon I'm enjoying things as much as he is. In fact, this happens so often that I've begun to count on it. I'm usually rewarded, right on the spot! I chase after four kids all day. On many of these nights I'm not really in the mood for sexual intercourse because I'm too tired or because my natural drive is just plain weaker than

his. On those occasions, I'll say, "I'm not really interested myself, but I'd love to do something for you." I know I'll at least like the snuggling, even if I don't get all fired up.

And while a long-term diet of drive-through sex isn't desirable, there's certainly still a place for a quickie since it defuses the power of a man's 72-hour cycle. Sometimes you just don't have the time or energy for the full package, but if you care about him, you can find just enough energy to get by. Regardless, there's something very fulfilling to a man in knowing his wife cares enough to help like this, even if it's not really "her night."

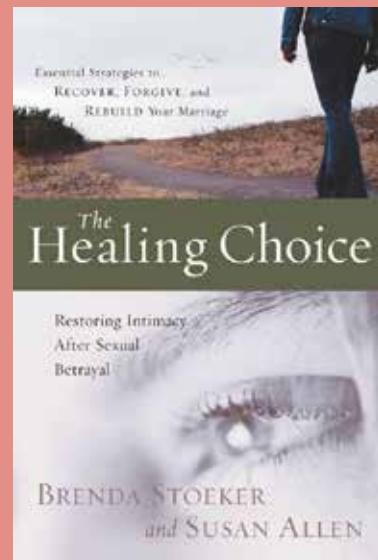
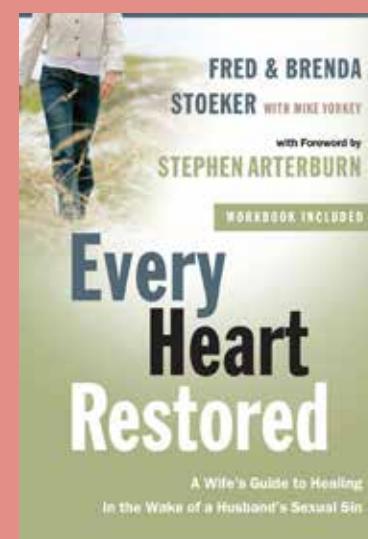
I don't pretend to understand Fred's sexuality. All I know is that sexual purity is not just every man's battle, but every couple's battle as well.

God bless you,
Brenda

J

Brenda Stoeker is a seasoned marriage teacher and a best-selling author. A fourth-generation Christian, she is also cofounder of Living True Ministries, whose mission is to practically elucidate God's truth while encouraging and equipping men and women to rise up to be Christian, rather than to merely seem Christian. Toward that end, Brenda coauthored the book *Every Heart Restored: A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin*, which won the ECPA's Silver Medallion in the Marriage Category in 2006. She lives in Des Moines, Iowa, with Fred, her husband of 35 fun-filled years.

BRENDA STOEKER'S BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT WWW.BRENDASTOEKER.COM



Dear Abigail,

After months of “warning signs,” I caught my husband viewing pornography on his phone. I am so disgusted. I wanted to believe this was a bad dream, but the reality is that he has confessed to having a serious addiction to pornography for more than a year. But even worse, he admits that this has been a “struggle” since his late teen years. I had no idea!

Our marriage is suffering, and I do not know how to help him or even if I want to help. I do feel sorry for him, but how can we possibly minister to others effectively with this in our life?

Sincerely,

Disgusted



Dear Disgusted,

For starters, thank you for your courage! It is very important for you to know that you are not alone in this struggle. In fact, according to the most recent statistics from Covenant Eyes, an Internet accountability program, 51 percent of pastors say that Internet porn is a real temptation. In addition, 75 percent of pastors do not make themselves accountable to anyone for Internet use.

Porn does not have a demographic. It crosses all demographics, so unfortunately, our pastor-husbands are not immune from the pitfalls of this industry. It is estimated that by 2017, a quarter of a billion people will be accessing mobile adult content from their smartphones or tablets. We must take action now! And your cry for help is one of the ways to start restoration, not only for you and your husband, but for other couples.

A great place for healing to begin is a daily, dedicated time of prayer specific to this issue for you (individually) and your husband (together). I also recommend reaching out to couples who have experienced victory over a variety of temptations in their marriage. And if you haven't already, install an Internet filter on all devices, and especially an accountability filter.

However, it is important to keep in mind not to become your husband's "parole officer." In

other words, watching his every move, checking his Internet history, and questioning him often is not the answer. It has been said that constantly checking everything never reveals the internal heart condition but only external performance. However, you—with a heart seeking to be his wife according to the will of God—are his best hope for real change.

What you really want is a changed, victorious man. Spend quality time together (not nagging time) finding the journey back to wholeness in your relationship. Encourage him to be the man God has called him to be as you study and pray daily together.

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:11-13, NKJV).

As you faithfully move forward and trust God for victory, your ministry together and to others will soar to heights that you cannot imagine! God has a plan. Trust Him.

Blessings,
Abigail

FROM THE FIELD

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

In April 2016, the Western Mindanao Conference held a pastors' and spouses' retreat in Coco Beach, Dapitan City, South Philippines. About 45 couples attended, and it was coordinated by Mrs. Alicia Guting.



Forty-five pastoral couples participated in meetings held in Dapitan City, South Philippines.

The Central Philippine Union Conference held a spiritual retreat for women and Shepherdesses in autumn 2015 at the Romblon Convention and Training Center in Romblon, Philippines. Some highlights of the meetings were Care Group Ministry and healthy lifestyle classes.



Attendees role-play Care Group Ministry.



An assigned group prepares healthy meals for the delegates.



Early-morning aerobics classes get the group moving.

West-Central Africa Division

Thirty Shepherdess leaders in Cameroon Union met in March for a three-day prayer retreat. The retreat, held in Ayos, focused on the prayer lives of ministerial spouses, encouraging them to form the habit of praying for their families and their churches.



Mid-North and West Ghana Conference attendees

Both the Northern and Southern Unions in Ghana also held their biennial retreats in March. The theme for both retreats was “Reach the World,” and numerous practical topics were covered, including “The Prayer Life of a Ministerial Spouse,” “Team Ministry,” and “Balancing Housework and Career.” Almost 200 attended in the Northern Union, and 250 attended in the Southern Union.



Mountain View Ghana Conference attendees



Mid-Central Ghana Conference attendees



Pastoral spouses in the Southern Ghana Union Conference gathered to learn how to “Reach the World.”

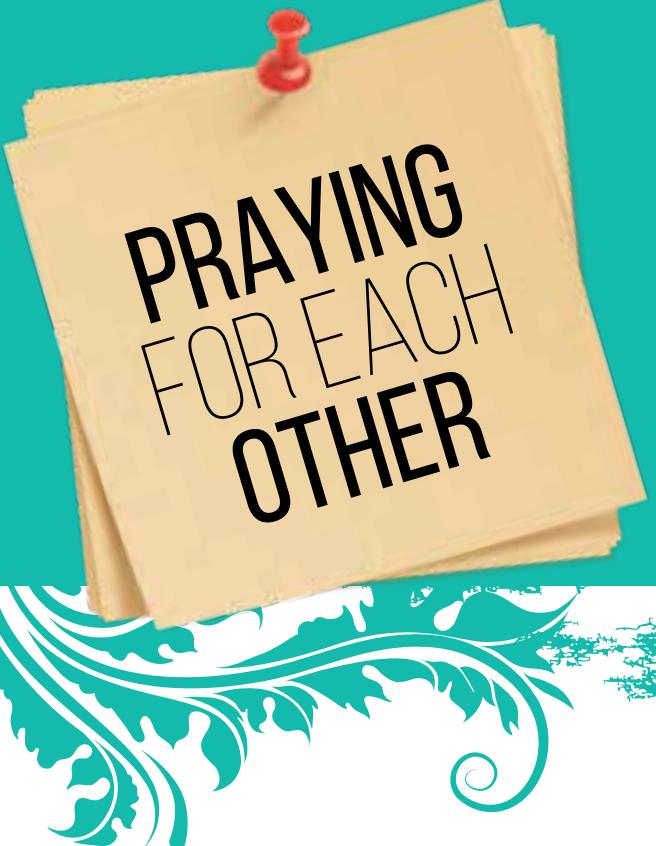


A group in the Southern Ghana Union Conference sings praises to God.



Pastors’ spouses met together in Cameroon for a prayer retreat.

Central Ghana Conference attendees



PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

If you have a special prayer request, or you'd simply like some friends in ministry to pray for you, email spouses@ministerialassociation.org. If requested, the prayer needs you share will be kept confidential, but all heaven promises to get involved!

Our Facebook page (facebook.com/groups/ministerials spouses) has an active prayer session every Wednesday called "Wednesday's Prayer Circle."

IN THIS ISSUE YOU'RE INVITED to pray especially for the ministry wives in the **East Central Africa Division**. They represent countless gifts and gracious ministry to those around them. Someday you will get acquainted with them in heaven and realize you prayed for very special friends you didn't know yet!

South Sudan has much war going on, and the people struggle with medical needs and lack of food. Please pray for the entire country, as well as for those who are greatly affected in all three fields (GUNF, GBF, and GEF). Clement Joseph Arkangelo Mawa, the conference president, writes, "Thanks for praying for peace,

means of feeding, and the health of the pastors' wives."

North East Congo Union is also experiencing war and instability. Mrs. Antoinette Mwangachuchu, the North East Congo Union Shepherdess coordinator, writes: "The entire territory needs prayers. There are so many issues: war, insecurity, lack of communication, and so on. The work is not easy due to the situation our country is experiencing. I am among those who need prayers."

Southern Tanzania Union Mission needs prayer especially for Shepherdesses who are ministering to families in

desperate need. In February a group of 10 pastors' spouses from South-East Tanzania Conference traveled 80 kilometers (50 miles) to the village of Msanga. The goal of their mission was to visit a family of physically disabled members, whom they had learned about through a news broadcast.

They found a struggling family—a mother, her daughter, and her two sons, all of whom had been born crippled. None of them could stand or walk but had to move by crawling. A while back they had been given a wheelchair, and the mother would haul her children, one at a time, to school every morning and pick them up

This quarter let us focus on these prayer promises:

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."

(Matthew 18:19, NKJV)

"A chain of earnest, praying believers should encircle the world. Let all pray in humility. A few neighbors may meet together to pray for the Holy Spirit. Let those who cannot leave home, gather in their children, and unite in learning to pray together. They may claim the promise of the Saviour: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20)."

In Heavenly Places, p. 93



The pastors' wives cheered up this crippled man and ask for prayers as they continue to assist him with food and shelter.



The Shepherdesses listened compassionately as a physically disabled mother explained her family's challenges.



These two little boys desperately need an education but are not able to get to school because they were born crippled and have nobody to assist them. Now the pastors' wives are bringing hope and help to this family.

in the afternoon. This proved to be a tiresome exercise for her, however, and as time went by the wheelchair needed regular maintenance, which she could not afford. So the children were no longer attending school.

The pastors' wives also found in the same village a crippled man living alone in a tent supported by four wooden poles. He has no relatives and faces the challenges of hot weather, winds, and wetness during rainy seasons.

The Shepherdesses were moved with compassion and donated foodstuffs to these two families. They also decided to build a two-room shelter and to facilitate education for the crippled children. They ask for your prayers as they minister to make a difference.

East Kenya Union just experienced the tragic loss of the Shepherdess coordinator from Nyamira Conference, Joyce Nyapara Nyakengo. Just one week after

attending an advisory and leaving excited about the challenge ahead of her, she had a collision with another motorbike on her way to work. She was thrown onto the road and crushed by a passing truck. Please pray for her husband, Richard Momanyi Nyakengo, who is the conference ministerial secretary. Also pray for the children, Renah Nyaboke Momanyi, Joshua Momanyi Bosire, Rebecca Mwango Momanyi, Naomi Barongo Momanyi, and Prudence Bosibori Momanyi. ■

"Everyone a Sower."

—Ted N.C. Wilson



Visit www.tmi/adventist.org

What is Total Member Involvement?

Total Member Involvement is a global initiative that empowers every Adventist to become an active disciple for Christ. It engages everyone, everywhere in evangelism and witness, using every potential means to hasten the coming of Jesus.

What is Happening Already?

- ▶ **Globally Coordinated Mission Trips:** Rwanda 2016, Romania 2017, Japan 2018, Papua New Guinea 2019, Indianapolis 2020.
- ▶ **Locally Coordinated Sabbath TMI Time:** Implementing TMI In Reach, TMI Out Reach, and TMI Up Reach!
- ▶ **Comprehensive Health Ministries:** Volunteers are experiencing the thrill of working with Pathways to Health and other health expo outreach events.
- ▶ **Spirit-Filled Awakening to Active Involvement:** From ADRA to local Community Service events, and from children's to senior ministries, God's last day people are sensing a revival to take the Great Commission to the next level!

What Can I do?

1. **Everyone can do something!**
2. **Get involved** in Sabbath school care groups or church outreach.
3. **Support** Adventist World Radio, Hope TV, the Voice of Prophecy, or other Bible schools, so their work can continue over the airwaves.
4. **Support and pray** for Adventist Mission and indigenous workers in unentered areas.
5. **Participate** in local and institutional health outreach events, such as health expos, or Pathways to Health events.
6. **Volunteer** with a local Community Service event or ADRA project.
7. **Organize** a health seminar, small group, Bible study, or evangelistic series in your home using the New Beginnings DVD.
8. **Help** with children's youth, or Pathfinder community service projects.
9. **Volunteer** with evangelistic events or Prophecy Seminars.
10. **Befriend** new members and disciple them.
11. **Pray like never before** for the advancement of the Gospel in hard-to-reach areas of the world. Pray that God will reveal ways that you can personally work in His vineyard.

