

THE A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES
JOURNAL

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*Giving God
a Chance*





ON THE COVER

Every marriage has its challenges, but are some too big for us to handle? Learn how fervent prayer and a wife's trust in Jesus led to her husband's overcoming powerful addictions and discovering God.

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“Where Did That Thought Come From?”

HAVE YOU EVER HAD an overwhelming desire for something that wars against your beliefs and values? As if your thoughts and feelings had been hijacked without your permission?

Think about this: “Satan will, if he is unsuspected, give feelings and impressions. These are not safe guides” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 413).

I have personally learned that this is true!

Once I heard a speaker tell about studies that psychologists conducted on male prisoners. First, they gave them all the food they could eat. Then they strategically placed electrodes to stimulate a certain area of their brains. Suddenly, the prisoners wanted to eat again, even though they were stuffed!

The psychologists conducted studies on other behaviors, such as sex and violence. They found that when certain areas of the brain are stimulated, reason is overridden.

The speaker’s point? Satan can strongly influence or override our thoughts and feelings.

One time I had been struggling for a while with thoughts and feelings that I knew were wrong, but I did not realize the thoughts were coming from Satan. I was confused and could not understand why I felt that way. Then one morning while I was drying my hair, overwhelming thoughts and emotions welled up inside me. I threw the dryer on the floor and cried out to God, “If this is Satan, take these thoughts and feelings away!” And suddenly, they were gone! And they’ve never returned.

Satan attacks when least suspected and in unanticipated ways. Sometimes I make the mistake of allowing my mind to dwell on inappropriate thoughts and feelings. But I am learning that when this happens, I need to stop, take a breath, and pray. I must continually look to God and cry out for help!

“We cannot save ourselves from the tempter’s power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices; but ‘the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ Proverbs 18:10. Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in

that mighty name” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 131).

James 4:7, 8 says, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (NKJV).

For me, this is the path to safety, release, and wonderful joy:

- Spend quality time daily with Jesus.
- Humble myself before Him.
- Ask Him to search my heart because of Jeremiah 17:9.
- Read my Bible, *The Desire of Ages*, or *Steps to Christ*.
- Pray for His grace, strength, a daily baptism of the Holy Spirit, and a hunger to love God with all my heart.
- Practice abiding in Jesus all day long.
- Watch and pray to be aware of Satan’s attacks (see Matthew 26:41).
- Praise God for the victory He promises in Philippians 2:13.
- Do acts of loving service or witnessing.

I have learned that I can pray anytime, anywhere—whenever temptation comes. I speak God’s Word aloud and praise Him for His promises of victory through Him.

Take heart: “No matter what may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that God gives. The Holy Spirit is our Helper” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, p. 139).

This issue’s focus is on practical daily living and dealing with issues that spouses of ministers may experience. We pray you will be encouraged and blessed. ■

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

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

Matthew 26:41



Alcohol, Drugs, and Porn

MY HUSBAND WAS HOPELESS! OR SO I THOUGHT.

THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM my husband, Rick, and I witness both inside and outside the church is couples ravaged by marital woes. As a pastoral couple, we have a soft spot for such couples, because at one time our own marriage was destined for disaster. But praise God, we found purpose in our pain, and now we share with others our journey that led to joy.

HOW IT BEGAN

Our whirlwind romance began in 1997. Rick was a certified public accountant and poultry farmer, and I was a registered nurse working at the local hospital. Rick was knee-deep in tax season, but he agreed to take a “time-out” for a date with me. We fell in love on that first date and were married less than two months later.

We blended our families fairly seamlessly. Rick had two boys, ages 6 and 7, and I had a 2-year-old son. Everyone seemed happy, and I was sure I had found my Prince Charming.

SERIOUS FLAWS

As time went on, however, I began to realize that my Prince Charming had serious problems. Rick was an alcoholic and used illegal drugs. Lust also had a hold on his life.

At first, Rick didn’t show any signs of being a drug user. He went to work at the office each day, always dressing nicely. Later, he set up his office at home so he could be more involved with the farm. There were good times, but most of the first seven years of our marriage were miserable.

Finally, I decided the best thing to do would be to leave my husband. All my friends and family said he would never change, and I believed that as well. Leaving him appeared to be the only solution. But then something happened that changed everything.

GIVING GOD A CHANCE

Fervent prayer had been my comfort. I was a Christian, but my faith wasn’t strong. I had reached a breaking point and was planning to end our marriage. What held me back was the baby we had just had together and our other three wonderful boys!

One morning, as I was getting ready for work, I began to plead and pray as I had never done before. I asked to be released from this situation.



For many years I had asked God to change my husband—but the biggest change was the one I was seeing in my own life.

It was then that I heard God speak to my heart: *Cindy, if you leave, you will not have a testimony.*

At first I argued with God, but finally I made the commitment to pray and fast regularly until my husband came to know the Lord as his personal Savior. I didn't know what the future held, but I felt certain that God was going to do something special in my life if I would be obedient and follow His instructions. God tells us, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3, KJV).

The journey was incredible. For many years I had asked God to change my husband. As I began to arise each morning at 4:00 to study and pray, I did, over time, see some interesting changes in my husband—but the biggest change was the one I was seeing in myself.

My nagging ceased—much to my husband's relief. I reached the place where I could forgive him. I let go of the past and looked forward to the future. And as God began changing me, it got Rick's attention.

MUCH-NEEDED INTERVENTION

Several months later a young man named Dave approached Rick and offered to have Bible studies with him. Dave was a nurse anesthetist and a coworker of mine at the hospital. I had noticed that he always offered prayer for his patients and kept a prayer journal in his scrub pocket. One day I asked him if he had any room left in his prayer journal to

add me and my husband—to which he replied, "Absolutely!" When Dave showed up on our poultry farm 30 miles from his home, I knew it was no accident. He had been praying for my husband for almost a year when Rick agreed to the Bible studies. God was up to something big!

Our marriage took a turn for the better, a turn toward God. There were no overnight success stories, only "one prayer at a time" stories. As Rick filled his life with more and more of Jesus, all the other things were pushed out and lost their hold on his life. I love the quote that my husband shares frequently: "You can't stomp sin out of your life, but you can crowd it out with Jesus!"

We both participated in weekly Bible studies for a year and attended a Bible prophecy seminar at our local church. Dave and his family, along with other church members, even paid for our family to attend a Pathfinder camporee. The whole church walked beside us as we learned new truths and a better way to live.

A LIFE-CHANGING DECISION

Rick fully surrendered his life to the Lord, and we began serving wherever we were needed. We decided to give the rest of our lives to God and were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church on November 6, 2004. Whatever God asked of us, we did. Every time God impressed us to take another step toward Him, we were obedient. We had learned that His way was the only way.

Tragically, only two weeks after our baptism, Dave and his wife, Lisa, were killed in a traffic accident. We were devastated, but we didn't let it destroy our faith. We had confidence that we would be reunited with our friends at Jesus' soon return.

Rick began doing the Bible studies with others that Dave had been unable to complete. Then church leaders started plugging my husband into local ministry. We both became actively involved.

We grew spiritually as we continued to study together. It wasn't long before my husband was ordained as an elder.

We soon sensed that God was leading us into ministry—but that seemed impossible! We lived in rural Arkansas and raised close to a million chickens a year. Our farm would not be easy to sell. Then Rick's mom told him, "If God wants you in ministry, He will send someone to buy your farm." That very night we received a call from a buyer!

The Arkansas-Louisiana Conference then called Rick to be a bi-vocational pastor for two churches. We couldn't believe how quickly life was changing for us! We faithfully served the Magnolia and El Dorado, Arkansas, district until July 2008, when the call came for Rick to enter full-time ministry in the Oklahoma Conference. While there, I had the privilege of serving as the conference Prayer and Ministerial Spouses director. In 2014, we accepted a new assignment with the Carolina Conference, where my husband now serves as pastor of the Morganton, North Carolina, church, and I am the conference Prayer and Women's Ministries director. I am still in awe of how "great is His faithfulness"!

A promise I claim daily is Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (KJV). God's promises are sure. It all happened for us because of prayer!

This past May we celebrated our twentieth wedding anniversary. I marvel at the way the Lord has worked with us. We have never looked back or doubted God's leading.

I am frequently asked, "Is it too late for my marriage to be saved?" My response is, "Not if you are able to pray!" Most of us are only one prayer away from a miracle. Go the distance with God, and watch Him do a miracle in your life. There really is no situation for which God cannot give complete victory. The only hindrance is our reluctance to rely on Him. ■

Cindy Mercer is the Prayer and Women's Ministries director for the Carolina Conference, works part-time as a registered nurse, and serves beside her husband, Rick, in ministry. Cindy and Rick have four sons, one grandson, and one granddaughter.

WAITING ON ANSWERED PRAYER

"I have been praying for a very long time—and still, no answer!"

How many of us have heard this phrase or even spoken these words ourselves? The truth is, I sometimes feel as if I coined the phrase!

That wonderful word *wait* can evoke concern and discomfort. It implies an indefinite period of time that seems to stretch for eons. But if you check out the word *wait* in a Bible concordance, you will find some beautiful, comforting scriptures that reveal a whole new meaning. For example, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1, NKJV).


Ten years ago that is exactly what I chose to do. I told the Lord my troubles and difficulties, and then I waited for Him to answer. That waiting period is different for all of us. For me, it was seven years! It was well worth the wait, however, because I witnessed my marriage—which was destined for disaster—transform into a testimony for Jesus!

I needed to get past the notion that prayer was just for a crisis (which I certainly had) or a last resort when everything else had failed. Prayer, for me, had to become an everyday part of life. Prayer didn't "just happen"; I needed to show up and participate. And, oh yes—wait.

God answers all prayers. Even though we don't see His answer immediately (or the answer we think it should be), we must never give up! We can have confidence that the earnest, sincere prayer is never ignored and never left unanswered—ever.

Love Is More Than a Feeling

TIMELESS MARRIAGE ADVICE



*Committed love
requires you to choose
to see the good in
your spouse
every day.*

FEELINGS ARE FICKLE. You can be completely in love with your partner one day, butterflies in your stomach and all, and completely turned off by him or her the next day and desperate for marriage advice on how to save your relationship. This creates a very unstable foundation for the marriage.

If you want to have a healthy relationship, you must change the way you think about love. There's nothing wrong with the "butterflies in your stomach" kind of love, but those feelings are temporary. There must be something more to it, otherwise the relationship will fall apart as soon as the feelings are gone.

ROMANTIC LOVE VS. COMMITTED LOVE

Falling in romantic love is easy and effortless. You don't have to do anything; it just happens. The only problem is that it is just as easy to fall out of romantic love.

Committed love on the other hand is quite different. It requires you to choose

to see the good in your spouse every day as opposed to focusing on the things that annoy and irritate you about them. It also requires you to accept them as they are—flaws, quirks, and all—and not try to change them.

It is easier to stay in love with your partner when you think of it as a commitment. Committed love is about being supportive, affectionate, kind, caring, and loyal to the one you love. It is a willingness to share life and all its unromantic aspects with your significant other.

This marriage advice can keep you from falling out of love with your husband or wife after the honeymoon period. It can also help you to create a stable foundation for love and marriage, one that is not based on fickle feelings. ■

Michael Tucker is speaker/director of Faith For Today, and host of the award-winning show Lifestyle Magazine.



When Divorce Is the Solution to Marital Problems

"AS YOUR PASTOR, I highly recommend divorce," I told my members on a recent Sabbath.

I knew I had their attention now. No one was going to sleep through the rest of *this* sermon. I could imagine the thoughts racing through their minds: *Is he preaching heresy? Will this be the last sermon this pastor preaches from our pulpit?*

Before I explain why I recommend divorce as a solution to marital problems, let me set the context by explaining the six stages of marriage. The reason we have these six stages is because of the entrance of sin into this world. If humans had not fallen and we were still living in the Garden of Eden, we would have only experienced stage one and stage six of marriage. But because of temptation and the entrance of sin, we have all six stages.

Stage one is the honeymoon. Everything is great and life is perfect at this stage. My advice to newlyweds would be to enjoy every minute of it. It would also be good to practice saying the following: "I love you." "I'm sorry." "Will you forgive me?" "I forgive you."

Saying these things requires very little effort when you are in the honeymoon phase. It's good to get into the habit of saying these things because when stage two rolls around, it can be painfully difficult to do so.

Mignon McLaughlin, a U.S. journalist and author, nicely summed up the honeymoon stage this way: "Pity all newlyweds. She cooks something nice for him, and he brings her flowers, and they kiss and think: How easy marriage is" (*Apercus: The Aphorisms of Mignon McLaughlin*).

What is marriage? It is a refining process, a furnace, meant to consume the dross.

Before we move to stage two of marriage, consider this important question: “Why doesn’t God allow us to continue in the honeymoon phase throughout our entire marriage? Why does our loving God allow the blissful honeymoon phase to come to an end?” Have you ever thought about that?

I believe it is because God is more concerned about our holiness than He is about our happiness. The reason He is so concerned about our holiness is because, ultimately, He’s concerned about our happiness. There is no true happiness apart from holiness. In Matthew 5:8 Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart” (NKJV). Another way of saying this is, “Happy are the holy.”

Interestingly, in Matthew 5:4 Jesus also says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (NKJV). This is a comforting promise for those who are mourning because of their marriage. For many couples, marriage has become a burden, a curse.

Notice what Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White has to say about Jesus’ promise to those who mourn: “The Savior’s words have a message of comfort to those also who are suffering affliction or bereavement. Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. God ‘doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.’ Lamentations 3:33. When He permits trials and afflictions, it is ‘for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’ Hebrews 12:10” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10).

I would like to paraphrase the last sentence this way: “When He permits the honeymoon phase to come to an end, it is ‘for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’”

The passage goes on to say, “If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. The cruel blow that blights the joys of earth will be the means of turning our eyes to heaven. How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not sorrow led them to seek comfort in Him!”

Once again, I would like to paraphrase the last sentence a different way: “How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not the honeymoon stage come

to an end, leading them to seek comfort in Him!” Our God who desires for us to be partakers of His holiness allows us to go from the honeymoon stage on to the next stage.

When I asked my members what they thought stage two is, one member shouted out, “The nightmare stage!” I guess that would be a fitting description.

Stage two is “What was I thinking?” When stage two comes around, people find themselves thinking, “My spouse and I are complete opposites.” For a lot of couples, the attributes that initially drew them to their spouse will later bother them. For example, the shy introvert who is attracted to the outgoing extrovert may later resent the spouse who is always away spending time with friends instead of being at home with family.

THE DIVORCE STAGE

The next stage is where divorce usually happens.

Stage three is “Everything would be great if you changed.” When we marry someone, we choose that partner out of the 7 billion people on this planet, and then all of a sudden we are saying, “You have to change.” It’s been said that women get married thinking, “I’ll change him.” Men get married thinking, “She’ll never change.”



When Divorce Is the Solution to Marital Problems

Now if you are in stage three and it is so bad that your home and marriage are falling apart, I highly recommend divorce. Yes, you read correctly. Let me repeat, "I highly recommend divorce." I wholeheartedly agree with this quote from *God's Little Instruction Book for Couples* by Jerry McCant: "You can never be happily married to another until you get a divorce from yourself. Successful marriage demands a certain death to self."

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:31 says, "I die daily." In Galatians 2:20 he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (NKJV).

We, too, must die to self if we want a successful marriage.

Consider these words in a marriage preparation manual titled *Before You Say "I Do"* by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts: "Marriage is a refining process that God will use to have us become the man or woman He wants us to become. Think about it. God will use your marriage for His purpose. He will mold and refine you for your own benefit and for His glory."

What is marriage? It is a refining process, a furnace. It gets extremely hot in a furnace. We must remember that the purpose of the fire is not to destroy you, but to consume the dross.

Ellen White has a lot to say about the refining furnace. We are told, "The refining furnace is to remove the dross. When the Refiner sees His image reflected in you perfectly, He will remove you from the furnace. You will not be left to be consumed or to endure the fiery ordeal any longer than is necessary for your purification" (*Our High Calling*, p. 312).

We can successfully get past stage three if we are willing to get a divorce from self and recognize that God desires to conform us into the image of Christ.

I CHOOSE TO LOVE YOU


Stage four is: I choose to love and accept you as you are. God is calling us to do for our spouse what He has done for us. God chose to love us, and it wasn't when we started repenting and getting our act together. The Bible says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still

sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NKJV). When Jesus was beaten and mocked, His response was, "I love you." When they pounded the nails into His hands, His response was, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34, NKJV). In Ephesians 5:25 it says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (NKJV). God is calling us to love our spouses with unselfish love as He has loved us.

If we can die to self and learn to love unselfishly by His strength and grace, we can advance to stages five and six.

Stage five is "I'm blessed to have you in my life." And stage six is "I want to grow old with you."

As we journey with our spouses heavenward, let us ever keep in mind that God is using our experiences in marriage to daily transform us so that we may reflect the character of Christ. We are told, "God's work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory. . . . God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 86).

Let's remember that God will bring us "over the ground again and again" until we become like Christ. This may explain why your spouse continues to do the same irritating, annoying thing that drives you up the wall day in and day out. If this is your experience, I highly recommend that you get a divorce from yourself today. May we be able to say with the apostle Paul, "I die daily." 

Martin Kim used to serve for Southcenter Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington Conference. He is now serving as a missionary in a closed country.

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Dear Abigail,

My pastor husband of eight years has been unfaithful to me. And, sadly, not just once but on several occasions and with different women. One of his most recent affairs involved the wife of a leader in our church. Obviously, I am saddened beyond words.

We are still together—but barely. Our home is damaged, and the wounds are deep. He is very remorseful and open for restoration, but I have no one to talk to, which causes me to feel isolated.

How can I possibly trust my husband again—much less forgive him? Where do we go from here? To whom can we go for help? What did I do wrong?

*Sincerely,
So Many Questions*

Dear So Many Questions,

No doubt you are hurt beyond description, and understandably so. While I cannot address every issue at hand, I will try to offer you a starting point, and we will trust God to give direction and wisdom.

I want to tackle the tough one first: forgiveness. Although the concept of forgiveness can seem unfathomable, how we respond to pain determines our healing and who we will become as a result. Forgiveness is about connection, not perfection. Romans 12:18 reminds us that “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (NIV). Forgiveness depends on you, not the transgressor. Many people think that forgiveness lets the transgressor “off the hook,” when, in reality, it lets you off the hook.

Second, discovering the root cause of these events is essential. The sin must not be ignored in hopes that it will not return. Complete restoration would be the ultimate goal. And the good news is that victory in Jesus is obtainable! An essential practice for you and your husband would be to claim Scripture promises daily and personalize them to make them real. One of my favorites is Proverbs 3:5, 6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (NIV).

You need to take the difficult step of talking with trustworthy individuals who have compassion and insight. Seek out a professional Adventist or Christian counselor, someone not connected with your local church. Most conference and union Family Ministries de-

partments have names of Christian counselors they can recommend. This will be a much-needed step for accountability in the days ahead. Most likely your husband has lost his ministerial credentials and employment as a pastor because of these affairs, and it’s best for him to step back from public ministry to focus on his family and personal growth. If church leaders do not yet know about his affairs, do not feel that you must keep the secret out of loyalty or shame. An affair with a church member is not “just adultery” but a form of clergy sexual abuse, and you should speak up for the sake of vulnerable members as well as your own family.

While I cannot know the ultimate outcome, it is important that your husband be completely honest with you, himself, others, and—most important—with God, so that complete healing and restoration can occur.

You are not alone when it comes to difficulties in your marriage. But with an open heart, commitment to prayer, and two partners who desire change, the possibilities for a union that honors God are unlimited! “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20, 21, NKJV).

Gratefully,
Abigail

Taking Care of Our Command Center—the Brain

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING THAT “GRAY MATTER” HEALTHY

ASK ANY ONE OF US to recite principles for keeping our blood pressure under control or ensuring good heart health, and we could probably do a pretty good job with the answers. But what about promoting good brain health?

What actually do we know about the gray matter inside our heads?


OK—so we know the brain is made up of about 77 percent water. We may also know the brain is our thought and memory center. We are aware that scary things can happen in our brains, such as strokes, dementia, or Alzheimer’s disease. But generally the brain is shrouded in mystery for most of us, and we don’t know much about how it works or how to take good care of it.

THINK ABOUT THIS

As we go through life, the central mission of the brain never changes. Its job is to help make sense of the world around us through information management, logic, judgment, perspective, and common sense. An individual’s creativity, wisdom, and personality remain pretty constant their entire lives, with wisdom actually increasing as we get older. Brain health has to do with the ability to remember, learn, plan, concentrate, and maintain a clear, active mind.

KEEP YOUR BRAIN YOUNG

It’s true that our brains change with age. One of the most feared consequences of aging is mental decline. But by taking steps to help keep the whole body healthy, we can enhance life now and also help cut down on some risks to the brain as we age. There is no magic pill, herb, or elixir that is 100 percent guaranteed to improve memory or brain health. It boils down to some simple lifestyle choices. Here are a few suggestions to consider:



“I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well.”

Psalm 139:14, HCSB

There is no magic pill. It boils down to lifestyle choices.

1. Keep Moving: The type of activity doesn't matter as long as you're getting your heart pumping for 30 minutes most days. Being active, especially outside in the fresh air and sunshine, promotes good circulation of oxygen-rich blood to the brain, particularly to the region responsible for clearness of thought. Exercise also releases those wonderful feel-good endorphins, which help elevate the mood and aid in putting life stresses into more positive perspectives.



2. Exercise Your Mind:

Brain activities stimulate connections between nerve cells. Studies have shown that this can even help the brain generate new cells, thus building up a functional reserve that can provide a hedge against future cell loss. Any stimulation—such as doing puzzles, figuring out math problems, engaging in creative crafts, reading, memorizing, or learning new skills that require manual dexterity as well as mental effort—can result in more efficient and adaptive brain performance.



3. Forget the Stereotype: Believing in the popular assumption that you are going to become more forgetful as you get older may just become a self-fulfilling prediction. Studies show that our thoughts and expectations about ourselves definitely affect our abilities, skills, and performance patterns. This principle is mentioned in the Bible (see Proverbs 23:7). Negative ideas of aging are rooted deep in society, and we need to beware lest these expectations become our expectations too. Thinking young can help you avoid harmful, aged stereotypes and stop you from thinking of yourself as old and ending up behaving old.

4. Choose Brain Health Foods:

A diet rich in brightly colored fruits and vegetables along with whole grains, beans, and nuts, and low in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, and cholesterol from animal sources, has been shown to be the best choice for both your heart and brain. Also important in lowering the risk of mental decline is keeping your calories in check in order to maintain a healthy body weight. And don't forget to drink plenty of water.



5. Control Those All-Important Numbers:

- Keep your pressure down.* Stay lean, exercise regularly, and do all you can to keep your blood pressure as low as possible. Elevated blood pressure can add to the risk of cognitive decline as one ages.
- Stay just sweet enough.* Diabetes is also a risk factor for dementia. Diet, exercise, and in some cases medication can all help keep blood sugar levels controlled.
- Clean up those arteries.* Diet, exercise, and weight control (and sometimes medication) will help keep your bad cholesterol (LDL) level down and the good cholesterol (HDL) up. Both these levels, if not controlled, can be risk factors for developing dementia.

6. Smile and Laugh More:

Smiling is easy to do, and it's free. It encourages positive changes in areas of the brain associated with memory. Smiling can be a mood booster. It helps release those hormones that make you feel good, which in turn can lower blood pressure, boost the immune system, and protect against the harmful effects of stress, depression, and anxiety. Smiling is contagious and can lead to laughter. Perhaps you have heard that laughter is the best medicine (Proverbs 17:22). It can be an instant mood-lifter, energizing the body and acting as a tonic for the brain. It's recommended that you smile at least five times daily. Find ways daily to have fun, and enjoy a good laugh or two as well.



7. Get Those

Zs: While you sleep without the distraction of outside stimulation, the brain has a peaceful, calm opportunity to process all the information it acquired during the day. It sorts through it all and stores those memories and data in the brain circuits. When you don't get adequate sleep this process is incomplete, and the effects are felt the next day in a slower mental response to situations. This can include impaired memory recall, decision making, and motor functions, such as driving a vehicle. You will feel mentally groggy, sluggish, and even grumpy. Help your brain at night by eating a light meal early in the evening and then taking time to unwind mentally and physically. Avoid looking at computer, TV, or mobile phone screens just before going to bed, as the blue light from these electronic devices can stimulate the brain into wakefulness. Seven to eight hours has been shown to provide a good night's rest for the whole body system.



8. Avoid Bumps and Bruises: Our fragile brains are encased in a strong, protective bone structure called the skull. But the brain can still suffer physical injury in the case of falls, violent shaking, or blows to the head. Moderate to severe head injuries can often result in headaches, loss of memory and clear thinking, and/or impaired motor function. Wear protective head gear when riding a bike, motorcycle, or recreational vehicle, and when engaging in a contact sport or otherwise physically risky activity.

9. Pick Up the Phone:

Stay connected with family and friends. Studies show that social activities and connectedness positively impact good brain health by building joy and a sense of purpose and usefulness into one's life. Family gatherings, attending church and community functions, becoming engaged in service to others—all these can bring new energy and vitality to the whole being.



10. Talk to Your Doctor: If you have questions or concerns about your brain health, make an appointment with your doctor. Changes in brain function, including short-term memory loss, do happen. Headaches, dizziness, or any symptom that is out of the ordinary should always be investigated.

SUMMARY

We don't have to sit back and hope for the best as we go through life. By tapping into the important lifestyle principles handed down to us by our wise and loving Creator, we can do much to strengthen and prolong our physical and mental abilities. Simple choices and good habits can make a big difference. 7

INFORMATION SOURCES:

1. <http://www.hellobrain.eu/en/brainhealth/project?id=adapt-your-lifestyle-to-protect-your-brain>
2. brainhealth.acl.gov/
3. <http://www.rd.com/health/wellness/7-anti-aging-tips-to-keep-your-brain-young/>
4. www.alz.org/brain-health/brain_health_overview.asp
5. <http://www.beautiful-minds.com/four-dimensions-of-brain-health/brain-health-tips>
6. <http://oedb.org/ilibrarian/100-ways-to-keep-your-mind-healthy/>

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.

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white top, holding a large, glossy red heart with both hands. The background is softly blurred, showing another person's shoulder and hair.

A Guarded Heart

DOES THAT MEAN I HAVE LITTLE FAITH?

A DEAR FRIEND RECENTLY told me the following story:

“The speaker at a women’s retreat was sharing how her husband was helping tsunami victims. He would call home so excited and passionate about his experiences. He then suggested that they move to that location to help. The wife chose not to share her true feelings about his request. Instead, she said, ‘I chose to guard my heart from him and his ministry.’”

My friend went on to tell me that, like the retreat speaker, she knew of many times in ministry when she had thrown up a wall of protection. She then added, “It hurts me to feel that at these times I placed a guard on my heart shielding myself from the demands represented by my husband’s service to the church and his ministry.”

Her words spoke to me. Perhaps they speak to you as well. After all, there have been times in my life when I have guarded my heart—and, it seems, for good reasons. The children were little and life was so busy. As a mother, a wife, and a nurse, I often seemed to have more than enough to do and too little time in which to do it. Between work, school, kids, home, and church duties, I had a great deal to manage. “Do I really have time to listen with my heart to another ministry idea from my husband?” I asked myself “Do I have the energy to understand the latest church problem or challenging issue that my husband is facing?”

Adding to the stress was the reality that there were moments when I wasn’t sure I even cared about the issues my husband faced. In the words of my friend and the retreat speaker, I lived with a “guarded heart.”

CARVING OUT A “PROTECTED PLACE”

Is it a lack of faithfulness to our spouse, to the church, and to God to carve out a place in our life all for ourselves—a “protected place” where we are free to be ourselves and attend to the needs of family and home and our personal desires? Perhaps you’ve been there and can relate.

In comparing notes with my friend on this important topic, we agreed that the solution is to daily bring our weariness and our needs before the Lord and ask Him to help us keep our hearts open to our husband’s needs, while at the same time being in touch with the needs of our children and ourselves. It is important to live life in balance—to be supportive where and when we can, while at the same time knowing that at times that means we may need to kindly say, “No, I can’t.”

For me, it doesn’t mean joining my husband on every visit, or being at my husband’s side for every meeting. Perhaps for you it is different. But the main point is to be open and make the time to let our husbands know we care and that we are listening.

“Dear Lord, take my guarded heart. Allow me to support and embrace the calling that is Yours through a willing and open heart, for Jesus’ sake.” ❏

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

Imitators of God

WHAT I LEARNED WHILE CARING FOR MY SICK HUSBAND

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN READING something when suddenly a sentence, a word, a phrase compelled you to stop?

Maybe you underlined those words or circled or copied them. What you have read is now imprinted on your brain and resting in your heart.

Let me share with you what caused me to stop reading recently.

It was something written by Dutch Sheets. He is a man who majors in prayer. He wrote: “Prayer is not a check request asking for things from God. It is a deposit slip—a way of depositing God’s character into our bankrupt souls.”¹

In other words, prayer is more than asking God for things; it is the means by which God places something within us—His character.

Ellen White said something similar: “Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564).

A CHALLENGING THOUGHT

That thought really challenged me. How often in my conversations with God do I ask for His character to be a part of me? How often do you ask that of Him?

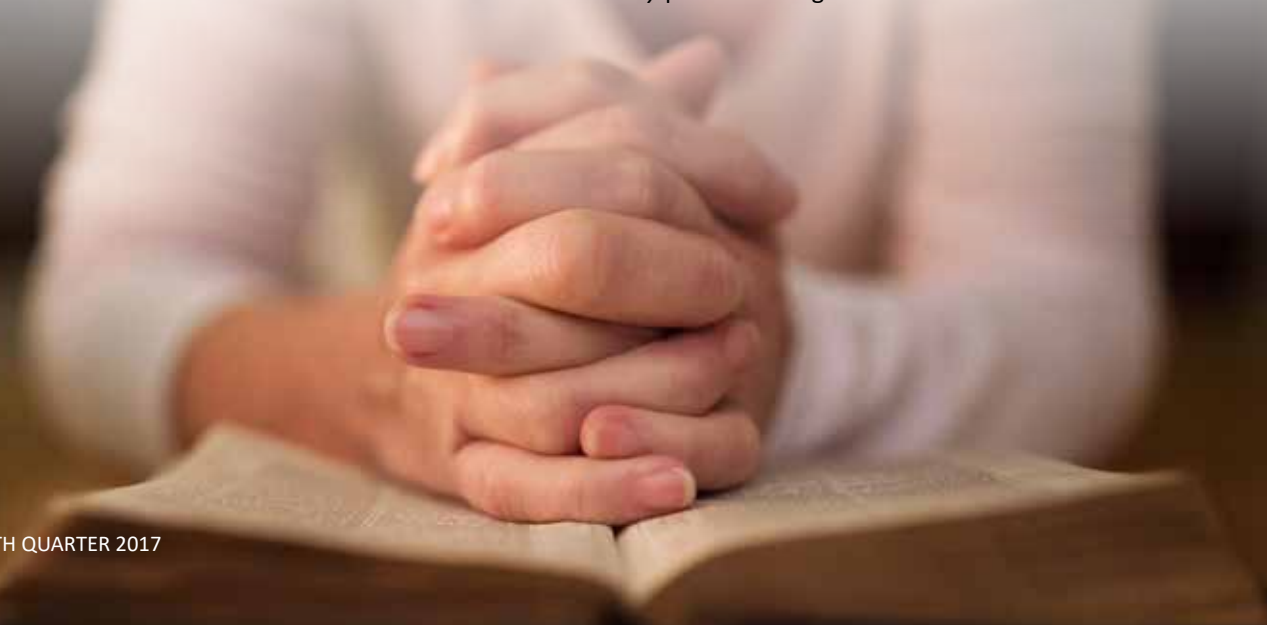
If we saw prayer as a means of depositing God’s character into our soul, as well as the way we pour out our deepest needs to God, we would be asking God to fill us up with so much of Him that those with whom we share life each day would experience something extraordinary—they would experience God’s love through us.

But to be honest, I don’t always ask God for His character to come into mine. After I have praised and thanked God, and taken time to confess my wrong thoughts and actions, I talk with God about my needs or the needs of those I care about. I seldom spend time praying for God’s character to take up residency within me, even though in Ephesians 5:1 we are urged to be imitators of God: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1, 2, NIV, 1984).

Recently, however, I came to realize how much I need to pray this every day.

SICKNESS STRIKES

My husband, Jonathan, was ill some time ago for about two weeks. What started off as a virus ended up as flu. Even though when I married him I promised to stand by him in sickness and in health, there were times during those two weeks when I was tempted to abandon that vow. Even though he was the patient, it was *my* patience being tried!



Just prior to my husband having the flu, I, too, had had a flu virus for a couple of weeks. After recovering I returned to work—with two weeks' work to catch up on, plus a new sermon to prepare for the coming Sabbath. I was tired and stressed!

One night I was awakened about 2:00 a.m. by Jonathan's coughing. He was coughing badly and needed some help. I was extremely weary. It had been nearly midnight before I tumbled into bed. As Jonathan coughed and coughed and coughed, I turned over in bed and pulled the covers up around my ears. I pretended to be asleep! Our daughter, Rima, however, woke up. She—reflecting more of God's character than I—came into our bedroom. She returned a few minutes later with a bottle of water for Jonathan, a bottle of aromatherapy oil to help him breathe better, and a box of tissues—accompanied by soothing words. Finally, she called out to me, "Mum, why aren't you awake? Can't you hear that Dad needs some help? He is really struggling!" With a big sigh I pushed back the covers and went downstairs to make Jonathan a hot cup of water with honey and lemon to ease the coughing.

As I peered into the honey jar, which was empty, I wondered whether I should go to the local store to purchase a new jar. The store is only two minutes away from my home and open all night. But, instead, I yawned, put some hot water in the jar, swished it around, and poured the contents into a cup with the juice of a lemon. I figured that Jonathan was too ill to notice that the honey was missing!

It worked. Jonathan finally stopped coughing and settled down to sleep. But I couldn't. I was wide awake. I tossed and turned and sighed several times before I pushed back the bed covers once again and got up. I was so agitated that I cleaned the kitchen, put ingredients into the bread maker, and even had my worship. And the whole time I was annoyed with my husband because he had woken me up with his coughing when I needed to sleep!

That night woke up something else in me, too: the realization that I need God to deposit His character within me. It is not enough for me to ask God to help me to be like Him; I need to ask God to clean out the selfishness within my heart and replace that with His character.

God so much wants us to reflect Him, and we can do that only if we pray for His character to be deposited within ours.

Instead of praying, "God, I would like to be kind like You," I need to pray the words that I shared earlier: "God, deposit *Your* character into my bankrupt soul." "God I need *Your* kindness placed inside of me today." "I need *Your* wisdom, *Your* peace, *Your* grace." It is much more powerful to pray that way.

A CHALLENGE FOR YOU

I'd like to challenge you to do the same; however, be prepared. Opening your heart to change may bring some painful experiences.

If you ask God to place His humility within you, you may be put into situations that cause you to become humble.

If you ask for His patience, you may go through trying times or be surrounded by annoying people or have to wait a long time for your prayers to be answered.

If you ask for victory over temptation, you can guarantee that everywhere you go there will be the yummiest, gooiest chocolate cakes!

But because God wants to deposit His character within us, He will answer those prayers.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

Remember, however, that some characteristics belong to God alone. He is the only One who is all-knowing, all-powerful. But other characteristics He yearns to place within us—characteristics that can showcase Him to this world. Characteristics such as love, truthfulness, goodness, mercy, kindness, and graciousness.

God so much wants us to reflect Him, and we can do that only if we pray for His character to be deposited within ours. Then we will be able to respond to situations God's way instead of our natural ways.

BACK TO MY SICK HUSBAND

A couple of days after my "annoying night" experience, my husband was still struggling with the flu and again began coughing and coughing. I asked him with concern and love if I could get him some honey and lemon to soothe his throat. His response? "No. Just let me die peacefully." I told you he is the worst patient in England! ¹

¹ <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1033202>

Mary Barrett is an associate pastor in the Cambridge District Church in England and has two daughters.



Healing Conflicts From the Inside Out

“WHAT JUST HAPPENED THERE?” I was bewildered and confused. A conversation that started with “Dinner’s ready, Darling!” had thrown us into a verbally vicious battlefield. And it was all about potatoes!

Bernie had bought a bargain sack of potatoes. But they were beginning to sprout, and I was trying to use them up quickly. They had been the basis of nearly every meal for three days. I was fed up with scrubbing and preparing them, and Bernie was fed up with eating them. So the innocent potatoes became a recipe for disaster.

We moved furiously from fighting about the potatoes to fighting about money, blaming each other’s family, adding extra fuel from a fight we had three years ago, and turning a minor conflict into a total catastrophe. A bowl of potato soup had ripped open our hearts and exposed our frustrations, our fears, and our insecurities.

Most couples have disagreements. That’s normal. We grow closer through our conflicts when they help us to understand each other’s feelings, needs, hopes, and hurts. Conflicts become opportunities to understand each other better when we learn how to discuss our differences in loving and respectful ways.

Innocent potatoes became a recipe for disaster.

PANIC PATTERNS

Dr. Sue Johnson is a couples therapist who has studied arguing couples for many years. Eventually she found some patterns in their behavior and language, which has enabled her to help many couples all over the world.

Dr. Johnson noticed that when one or both partners feel unsafe, they are more likely to panic and escalate a relatively simple discussion into a catastrophic conflict. Search for the video “Still Face Experiment” on YouTube and watch what happens when a baby experiences a similar kind of attachment panic. You can read about these patterns in the excellent book that Dr. Johnson wrote with Kenneth Sandefer, *Created for Connection*.¹

THE REALLY BIG QUESTIONS

Dr. Johnson noticed that underneath couples’ panic patterns were several deep and basic questions about the relationship:

- Do you really love me and care about me?
- Can you empathize with my feelings?
- Do you care about my struggles, and are you willing to help me?
- Can I depend on you? Will you always be there for me?

God knows we have these BIG questions, and He sets us a powerful example by answering them before we even ask them:

- I love you and care about you (Jeremiah 31:3).
- I am compassionate toward your feelings (Psalm 103:8, 13, 14).
- I am always available to help you (Isaiah 41:10).
- I will always be with you (Joshua 1:9).

DEBRIEFING THE POTATOES

When we debriefed our potato episode we realized that some of these BIG questions were fueling our reactions to each other.

When I was upset about the potatoes, I was really asking questions like these: Do you care about me? Do you know how much of my time and effort it takes to scrub and prepare the potatoes? Do you care that I feel alone and unsupported in the kitchen? Do you care that making all these potato dishes takes extra time when I’m already busy? Do you care that I have taken an hour to make you a meal? Do you appreciate what I’m doing for you? Do you appreciate how much effort I’m exerting to save money in every area of our life?

When Bernie was upset about the potatoes he was asking similar questions. Do you appreciate how hard I’m working to provide for us? Do you appreciate my efforts to manage our budget by buying good-value potatoes?

UNDERSTANDING POWERFUL EMOTIONS

We used to argue, make up, and then forget about our disagreements. Now we take time to reflect on them together and to see what we can learn from them. Whenever one of us feels very strongly about something in a way that seems disproportionate to the current situation, we start wondering, “When have I been in a similar situation?” or “When have I felt like this before?” We usually trace these powerful emotions back to something that happened when we were children, or a time when we felt very vulnerable. For example, I noticed that some everyday conversations would leave me feeling unsafe and distressed. We looked for the pattern and discovered that I had a highly sensitive “shame radar.” If I detected the slightest hint that I was being shamed, laughed at, or put down, it would trigger my defense shield, and I would be more likely to overreact to the current situation.

Oh, love me—and right now!— Hold me tight! Just the way you promised. Now comfort me so I can live, really live.

Psalm 119:76, 77,
Message

I wondered where this strong shame reaction came from. Then I remembered that my first-grade teacher humiliated me in front of the whole class almost every week. I began to tell Bernie about those painful stories. He listened to me, comforted me, and began to understand why and where I hurt. I learned to recognize that these strong emotions were connected with the stories from my past, and then it was easier to recalibrate my emotional response to the here and now.

ANSWERING THE BIG QUESTIONS

Arguments are much less likely to happen when a couple feels close and secure. These simple things will help reduce conflicts and negative interactions:

- Be kind to each other every day. This is one of the most powerful ways to nurture a relationship (Ephesians 4:32).
- Show or declare your love in different and creative ways at least once a day (1 John 4:7-19).
- Be specifically thankful and appreciative at least once a day (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- Ask about each other's high and low points in the day. Celebrate the good points and comfort the low points: "I am so sorry that you had to go through that. It must have been so sad/difficult/frustrating/lonely, etc." (Romans 12:15).
- It's surprising how often the sense of being alone and unsupported fuels many conflicts between couples. Offer to help each other at least five minutes a day (Galatians 6:2).
- Affirm your husband or wife regularly and talk about your commitment to each other (Matthew 19:6).

¹ Sue Johnson and Kenneth Sanderfer, *Created for Connection* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company), 2016.

Karen Holford is a family therapist and director of the Family Ministries Department for the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

ARE YOU A LOCAL CHURCH LEADER WITH A POWERFUL STORY TO TELL?

Revival & REFORMATION

The Revival and Reformation initiative of the General Conference wants your testimony to encourage and strengthen the global church family.

We want your story that illustrates

- Congregational revitalization through corporate prayer
- The deepening of personal spiritual experience through prayer and Bible study
- Dramatic soul winning stories that are rooted in prayer
- God's providential movements in your congregation

Inspire others and share what God is doing in your church by visiting revivalandreformation.org/share or by emailing thomasja@gc.adventist.org

KEEP IT FOCUSED! STORIES SHOULD BE ABOUT 250 WORDS / ALL MANUSCRIPTS WILL BECOME THE PROPERTY OF REVIVAL AND REFORMATION AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION. / WE WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY, BUT PUBLICATION IS NOT GUARANTEED

Peacemakers!

YOU CAN HELP PEOPLE BE FRIENDS AGAIN. HERE'S HOW.

JESUS SAID PEACEMAKERS are so special that they will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9)! It takes courage to be a peacemaker. Whenever you help people to sort out their arguments and make friends again, you are helping them to feel God's love. The worship activities on the next few pages will help you to develop your secret peacemaking skills.



WHAT ARE YOU FIGHTING ABOUT?

Have you ever wondered what you fight about most? And how you could stop that fight next time around?

Here are some things people fight about. Add some other arguments you have with your friends and family. Then write down one thing you could do differently the next time to stop the fight from getting worse.

WHAT WE FIGHT ABOUT:	WHAT I COULD TRY NEXT TIME:
When we both want the same toy.	
Being asked to do something I don't want to do.	
When something seems unfair.	
When someone messes with my stuff.	
When someone says something I don't like.	
When we both want to go first.	



REMOVE THESE PAGES FOR CHILDREN



REMEMBER THE POWER OF ONE!

It takes only one person to start a fight—
and any selfish person can do that!

But it takes only one courageous, wise,
and kind person to stop a fight!

Which one do you want to be?



PEACE-GIFTS

Read Proverbs 18:16. Talk with your family about this verse. Has anyone ever given or received gifts to make up after an argument?

Think about the last argument you had. What nice thing could you do or what could you give to the other person to show that you want to be friends again? Draw your action or gift inside this gift box.

PEACEMAKING ABIGAIL

Read the story of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. She prevented a big fight between her foolish husband and King David by giving peace-gifts.

How much food did she give to David and his soldiers? Write the numbers below:

_____ loaves of bread

_____ measures (seahs) of roasted corn

_____ bottles of wine (grape juice)

_____ clusters of raisins

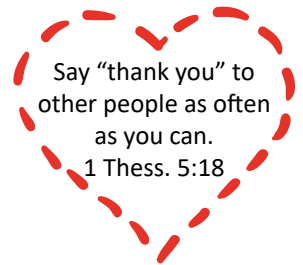
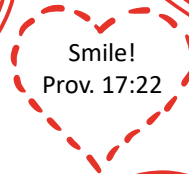
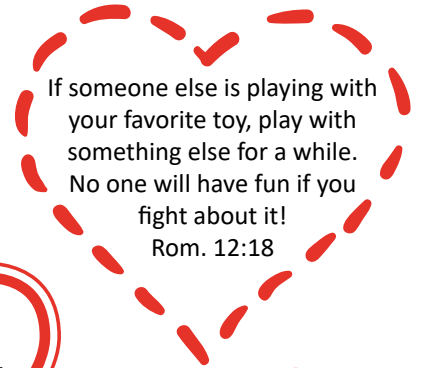
_____ sheep

_____ cakes of pressed figs



BE A SECRET PEACEMAKER!

Here are some things you can do to have fewer arguments. Circle all the ideas you want to try. Color in the heart after you have tried the idea and it helped.



LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Learn this great Bible verse to help you to be a peacemaker:

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

James 1:19, NIV

“Everyone should be quick to listen,

(Hold the bottom of your ears as if you are listening, and then run fast in one place.)

slow to speak

(Walk slowly in place, opening and shutting your hand slowly next to your mouth as an action for speaking.)

and slow to become angry.”

(Walk even more slowly in place. Say the words more and more quietly and slowly. When you say the word “angry,” jump up in the air and say it loudly.)

Practice this verse together with a family member and then talk about what it means. How does listening to other people help us to be good peacemakers?



THE LISTENING SECRET

One cool way to stop a shouting kind of argument is by putting James 1:19 into action and listening carefully to the other person. It sounds funny, but it can really work! Practice your good listening skills at home and see what happens!

- Listen to your friend. Let them know you're really listening by repeating back to them what you heard. Say things like, "Let me just check that I've got that." "So you're saying that . . ." "OK, so when this happens you feel . . . ? Is that right?"
- Find out more. Ask questions such as, "Tell me more about that so I can understand it better."
- Help your friend calm down by saying things such as, "That sounds tough. I'm really sorry you're so frustrated and upset."
- Do something kind: "Can I do anything to help you?"
- If you both want different things say, "OK, so you want this [describe what the person wants], and I want this [describe what you want]. How can we sort out our problem together? Or maybe we need to find a grownup to help us."



SORTING IT OUT

Here are some people in the Bible who disagreed, quarreled, or stopped being friends with each other. Find out what they fought about. Then discover how they solved their problems and made friends again.

Abraham and Lot (Genesis 13)

Isaac's wells (Genesis 26:12-33)

Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25; Genesis 27:1-46; Genesis 32, 33)

Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37; Genesis 42-45)

PRAYING FOR PEACE

- Look through a newspaper or search the Internet to find a country where currently there is a war or conflict. Find out all you can about this country and pray for peace.
- If you know people who fight and argue a lot, pray for them too. Pray that they will find peaceful and kind ways to sort out their problems.
- Write your peace prayers on cardstock doves and hang them from a branch, or make a garland with them. Add Bible verses about peace too.
- What do you like best about each of the stories?
- What is the most important lesson in each story for you?
- Which person in the story is most like you?
- What can you learn about being a peacemaker from each of these stories? 7

Karen Holford is a family therapist and director of the Family Ministries Department for the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

TIPS TO ~~SURVIVE~~ THRIVE

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

It's easy to focus on all the negative things your spouse does. Or on all the stuff they forget to do. Or on the fact that your spouse is often away from home in the evening, works long hours, etc. The more we think about the negative, the more frustrated, upset, or disappointed we feel. Satan wants to destroy our marriages and knows that even the most minor negative things—when dwelt upon—can cause trouble, bitterness, and distance. But don't let him win!

Choose to think about the positive. Choose to focus on the good qualities about your spouse. Consider writing down five things every day that you are thankful for regarding your spouse. Choose to affirm your spouse for their hard work, dedication, and provision. Look for ways to cheer your spouse on, especially when they are under stress or facing a difficult situation. When you are around other people, look for ways to build up your spouse. Choose to not repeatedly bring up their past faults, especially if they have asked for your forgiveness and desire a new start. Talk together and seek solutions for the things of significance, and be willing to let go of the insignificant.

This may be difficult at first, but you will be amazed by the result of your change in focus. It will very likely affect your spouse positively, but more important, your love and appreciation for your spouse will grow. In addition, your forgiveness and grace toward your spouse will increase. You will find yourself overlooking the small annoyances and focusing on the blessings of your marriage!

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8, 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: spouses@ministerialassociation.org

Special Quotes

"Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous. By the grace of God you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do."

The Adventist Home, p. 118

"The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward. Jesus wants to see happy marriages, happy firesides."

The Adventist Home, p. 99

"God has ordained that there should be perfect love and harmony between those who enter into the marriage relation. Let bride and bridegroom, in the presence of the heavenly universe, pledge themselves to love each other as God has ordained they should. . . . The wife is to respect and reverence her husband, and the husband is to love and cherish his wife."

The Adventist Home, p. 103

Tips for Feeding a Crowd on a Budget



IT WAS A TYPICAL, FRENZIED FRIDAY afternoon as I prepared a special meal for Sabbath. I was planning to invite a few guests for lunch after church and had prepared accordingly. As I sat in the service the next day, my gaze swept the congregation and rested on an older couple and two single women. *I'll invite them!* I decided. They graciously accepted my invitation, and as I bustled out the door I whispered to my husband, who was greeting parishioners, that we were having guests. He often got caught up in conversations with members, so I expected he'd be home a bit later.

My children and I raced home (across the church driveway) to finish preparing the meal, and our visitors arrived a few moments later. When the food was ready and the table set, I texted my husband to come home. Imagine my surprise when he walked in the door with two additional guests! Thankfully, I've learned the power of flexibility, and it was easy to set out a few extra plates. My only concern was the amount of food I had. Would it stretch? The Lord expanded our "loaves and fishes," and everyone had plenty.

If I've learned anything in my years as a pastor's wife it's this: when preparing food for guests, always plan more than you need! You never know when your group of two will expand to six! This can be difficult on a ministry budget. So, here are some helpful tips and menu ideas for feeding a crowd while still pinching your pennies.

1. **Potluck.** Invite friends to meet at your home and plan a potluck-style meal. Some fun themes for food could be international (representing your country of origin), breakfast for lunch, or a baked potato bar with guests providing their favorite toppings.
2. **Plan ahead.** When you are making a casserole, patties, vegetarian meatballs, or soup, prepare extra to freeze. Then when you are short on time, you can just pull the dish out and heat as usual. Rice can be precooked and frozen, then defrosted when ready to use.

3. **Serve simple food.** Pasta is inexpensive and feeds a crowd. Almost everyone I know loves haystacks, a build-your-own dish of chips or rice, beans, lettuce, cheese, tomatoes, salsa, sour cream, and olives. You can create your own rice or noodle bowls, too, with favorite toppings from your region. Soup (or stew) is inexpensive and easy to prepare, and you often have all the ingredients on hand. Serve it over rice or with cornbread to complete the meal.

4. **Buy bulk if you can.** I shop at a wholesale food store quite often. I'm able to buy large quantities of ingredients for less money than at a regular grocery store. I stock up on tortilla chips, fruit, rice, flour,

sugar, and fresh or canned vegetables. Watch for sales on items that you know you will use for entertaining, or buy them on clearance.

Keep your hospitality simple. One of my friends recently told me, "I'm not coming over to inspect your house. I'm coming over to spend time with you." Fellowship is more important than an elaborate spread of food and the finest china. ■

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INEXPENSIVE CROWD-PLEASING RECIPES



GREEN BEAN AND TOMATO STEW

- Olive oil
- 4 cups canned green beans
- 1 large can diced tomatoes, in juice (or two 15-oz. cans)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp – 1 tsp salt
- Lebanese Baharat or Middle East Mixed Spices (optional)
- Sugar

Instructions:

In a large stockpot, sauté onion in a small amount of olive oil over medium heat. When semi-clarified, add minced garlic and sauté a moment more. Add green beans and tomatoes. Cook for about 3-4 minutes, add a pinch or two of sugar (to neutralize the acid), about 1/4 - 1/2 tsp. of the spice mix, and salt to taste. Continue to cook for about 5 minutes more, or until all ingredients are fully incorporated and stew is bubbling nicely. Taste and adjust seasonings. Enjoy hot over white or brown rice.

CROCKPOT BEANS

In a crockpot or slow cooker, place:

- 3 cups dried beans, rinsed
- 8 cups water

Allow to cook for 2-3 hours on high. Add the following seasonings, and continue to cook until beans are completely soft:

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon dried onion, OR
- ½ a fresh onion, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
- 1 tablespoon salt

East-Central Africa Division



North Rwanda Shepherdess leaders gather after a recent continuing education seminar.



Shepherdesses from North-East Tanzania Conference meet for a continuing education convention in Hedaru-Kilimanjaro.

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Shepherdess coordinators in the East Zimbabwe Conference are busy equipping ministry spouses in their region. During the course of five months, they held a Shepherdess training session covering topics from Christian marriage to “rebranding” as a pastor’s wife; organized seven all-night prayer meetings in multiple districts; conducted pre-marital counseling and lifestyle seminars for the community; established a Voice of Prophecy correspondence Bible school that resulted in 10 baptisms; and held successful Vacation Bible Schools and cooking classes in several districts.



Shepherdess leaders in the Malawi Union Conference have translated books such as *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *Bible Readings for the Home into their local Chichewa dialect*. They encourage the pastoral spouses in their conference to read a portion of these books every day. Pictured with English book titles is Rose Sibande, Malawi Union Shepherdess coordinator.



East Zimbabwe Conference Shepherdesses attend a quarterly training session.



North-East Mission Shepherdesses and the Mozambique Union Ministerial team show a completed chair cushion—the result of donated sewing machines.



Children pose after a VBS class graduation.



Shepherdesses in South Mission Conference in Mozambique bought a peanut butter-making machine and sell peanut butter to generate funds for outreach to needy people in their community.



Shepherdesses in the North-East Mission, Mozambique Union, take sewing lessons after receiving a donation of sewing machines from Shepherdess International.



Northern Zambia Union Conference ministry wives participate in a community service project during the recent Shepherdess convention in Mpika.



Northern Zambia Union Conference Shepherdesses gather at a convention.

Southern Asia Division



Ministerial wives attend a special advisory at Manamadurai church in the Sivagangai-Ramanathapuram Section.



Lusaka Conference Shepherdesses gathered toiletries and food items to donate to Provident Home, a local parish school for special needs children. Ellen Chiyangaya, Shepherdess coordinator, shared encouragement with the Catholic sisters who operate the school and prayed that God would give them strength to continue the work.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Ministry wives in the Pakistan Union recently met to share a special meal together. They spent time praying for one another and for church work around the world.



Pakistan Union Southern Section ministry wives.



Lusaka Conference Shepherdesses are shown with sisters from Provident Home.



Pakistan Union Northern Section pastors' wives.



Pastors' spouses meet during a ministerial prayer conference conducted by Jerry and Janet Page in Vietnam.



Pastors' spouses pray for one another in Vietnam.



Wives of newly ordained ministers in the Cameroon Union Mission.



WAD ministry spouses attended a five-day Shepherdess training conference in Abidjan. Seminar topics ranged from preparing a pastoral home to issues facing the pastor's wife. They also learned to make tofu, soy milk, and communion bread.

West-Central Africa Division



Recently WAD Shepherdess leaders met at the division office to pray for their husbands' ministries and for strengthened relationships with one another.



Mid-South Ghana Conference Shepherdesses meet for a retreat.



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