

THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

Vol. 35 | Issue Two 2018

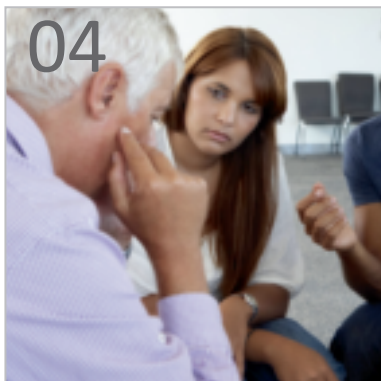
Over-Connected





ON THE COVER

Is technology replacing family time in your home? Do you control your gadgets, or do they control you? In this issue we talk about how to disconnect from machines and reconnect with life.



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

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Printed in the U.S.A.
www.ministerialassociation.org/spouses/

PHOTO CREDITS: dreamstime.com, freepick
COVER PHOTO: shutterstock | Chaay_Tee

The Great Disconnect



A COUPLE SITS ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER at a restaurant table. Slight smiles play at the corners of their lips as they gaze adoringly down at the small, mesmerizing screens they hold in their hands.

A family relaxes in their sitting room, spending quality time together. Mother drools over a decadent recipe posted on Instagram; Father laughs at a tweet on Twitter; the kids' eyes are glued to the computer—they're enchanted by the fast-moving, colorful scenes on the screen.

What is wrong with these two scenarios? Are these families really spending time together? And what about the effect artificial stimulation has on their social, mental, and spiritual development? For millions of people around the world, media usage or—dare I say—*addiction* has profoundly impacted not only their relationships but the way they view life in general.

Carolyn Crist, a freelance health and science journalist, shares: "In the last few years, research has begun to tell us just how awful social media is for our brains. It can lower our self-control, which can boost impulse spending and food cravings. It can make us more open to peer pressure. It seems to hurt our self-esteem and make us feel lonely, frustrated and angry when

comparing ourselves with others. And the online chat functions can seriously mess up our perceptions of everyday in-person interactions"¹

A recent online post by *Psychology Today* agrees:

"Have you ever seen a mother chuckle as her baby tries to 'swipe' a real photograph, or punch their fingers onto a poster or books as if it were a touchscreen? It may seem cute, but it points to something much deeper in the child's brain—an internalization that *all actions have an immediate effect*, and all stimuli elicit a quick response.

"This is true in the on-screen world, but nowhere else. When every finger swipe brings about a response of colors and shapes and sounds, a child's brain responds gleefully with the neurotransmitter dopamine, the key component in our reward system that is associated with feelings of pleasure. Dopamine hits in the brain can feel almost addictive, and when a child gets too used to an immediate stimuli response, he will learn to always prefer smartphone-style interaction—**that is, immediate gratification and response—over real-world connection**" (emphasis supplied).²

This information is alarming on so many levels. This was never the life

God intended for us. He created us hardwired for intimacy, with a longing for personal interaction and connection with others. He created us to have sound minds, exercising self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23). That feeling of immediate gratification—getting what you want when you want—is addicting and deceptive, especially in spiritual terms. When my prayers aren't answered exactly the way I want or in my timeframe, how do I view God?

Does media have great things to offer? Sure! Appropriately used, media is incredibly helpful and should be utilized. But careful boundaries should be set in place to control the time consumed and the content viewed.

In this issue of *The Journal*, you will find articles specifically addressing "screen time." We hope to offer a balanced view of both the benefits and the challenges associated with exposure to media. We pray you'll be blessed. J

¹ pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/02/on-the-mind-your-brain-on-social-media.html.

² psychologytoday.com/blog/behind-online-behavior/201604/what-screen-time-can-really-do-kids-brains).

Beth Thomas is a pastor's wife and busy mother of two. She is a contributing editor to *The Journal* and resides with her family in Maryland.

Hope for the Wounded: Advocating for Addiction

RECOVERY AMONG ADVENTISTS



“HELLO, MY NAME IS JULIET,” I begin as I introduce myself in my 12-step Sabbath School class. “I’m a grateful believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I struggle with workaholicism and codependence that manifests itself in perfectionism and control. Food is far too often my drug of choice.”

If you were in my group, you would say, “Hi Juliet!” and I’d feel a tad less vulnerable and a little more courageous for having shared a raw truth about myself with a circle of people on a Sabbath morning.

It took years to reach this place, years of allowing God to gently peel away onion-skin-thin layers of shame. As a third generation Seventh-day Adventist, I am no stranger to church. I am, however, a stranger to “airing your dirty laundry” at church. I grew up in a church culture where people sat like well-dressed ducks in a row. We smiled, nodded, and said “Happy Sabbath!” with gusto. If on a particular Sabbath we were not happy, we’d never let anyone know.

For much of my twelve-year marriage to a chemically dependent spouse, Sabbaths held a concoction of relief, hope, and dread: relief if he was sitting in the pew next to me, hope that he was really “clean and sober,” and dread that someone might discover our family’s dirty little drug secret. Church often felt lonely, even though we were active participants. I naively believed we were the only couple dealing with the corrosive effects of drug addiction. Hindsight proves me wrong. We were simply one more unaddressed statistic in our church. Many more filled the pews. There was no safe, healthy place to address our reality, and there were no relevant resources specific to our needs.

That was a decade ago. Although cocaine eventually destroyed my marriage, God continues to redeem every dream I thought was lost. In 2007, I was humbled to the core when the happy Christian-family facade I’d carefully built utterly disintegrated. In the aftermath of divorce, I discovered my own need for recovery from the pain and poor habits I had developed as coping mechanisms. When my spouse was no longer available to blame, I was forced

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you [me] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”

to face the truth about me. What part did I play in the sick cycle of addiction that ruled our union? Why did I respond to every uncomfortable situation with fear-based control? How could I prevent myself from repeating my unhealthy patterns in new relationships?

In my quest for answers, I discovered a nondenominational Christ-centered recovery program in a church across town. I learned the biblical principles of recovery and began applying them to my situation. I accepted the truth that I am not my sin, nor am I the sin that has been done to me. It was there that I embraced the idea that my identity is in my Savior, Jesus Christ. I began living by His promise in Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you [me] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (NKJV).

Fast-forward several years. I am now the wife of a kind Adventist pastor. My life is completely different, but I have not forgotten the pain of sitting in church week after week with a broken marriage and a wounded spirit. Sadly, as a pastor’s wife, I see and hear too many stories similar to mine from long ago. Addiction is destroying families from the inside out, whether it is an addiction to food, alcohol, illegal substances, or pornography.

Kiti Freier Randall, Ph.D., who has served as the director of Psychological Services, Department of Pediatrics, Loma Linda University Health, is a board member of the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. In an *Adventist Review* article entitled “Substance Abuse in the Family,” Randall states, “We prefer to believe that substance abuse doesn’t happen in our church families; however, as a psychologist who has had the privilege of providing various behavioral health training for the Adventist Church in more than 40 countries, I can assure you substance abuse is a struggle for many Adventist families” (July 8, 2014). For me, it is not enough to simply be aware of, or compassionate toward, Christians wounded by addiction. I am compelled to make a difference in my local church and the Adventist Church at large. My vision and passion is for every congregation to have Christ-centered 12-step recovery groups where men and women can find the hope, healing, and wholeness that come from fulfilling the law of Christ by bearing

one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), consistently speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and humbly confessing faults and praying for one another (James 5:16).

Shame, secrecy, and fear breed in isolation. Healing takes place within the context of a safe, healthy, supportive community. People struggling with addiction, and those who love them, need hope. In *The Ministry of Healing* Ellen White spoke of this hope:

“Christ honored man with His confidence and thus placed him on his honor. Even those who had fallen the lowest He treated with respect. . . . As we partake of His Spirit, we shall regard all men as brethren, with similar temptations and trials, often falling and struggling to rise again, battling with discouragements and difficulties, craving sympathy and help. Then we shall meet them in such a way as not to discourage or repel them, but to awaken hope in their hearts” (p. 165).

In response to the alarming rate of addiction among Adventists, recovery resources have become increasingly available from denominational sources.

Many resources may be found at Adventist Recovery Ministries, an official resource of the North American Division. The Hope Channel and 3ABN offer recovery programs such as *Unhooked* and *Celebrating Life in Recovery* to provide insight and tools for dealing with addictions. Books, such as *The Journey to Wholeness*, by Jackie Bishop and Shelley Curtis, and a recovery edition of *Steps to Christ*, are available through Adventist Book Centers.

I am excited about these resources. I am hopeful that our churches will embrace the opportunity to become relevant to those suffering the effects of addiction. Will you join me in following the footsteps of Christ and becoming a hope-giver in your congregation and community? 1

Juliet Van Heerden is a writer and pastor’s wife. Her blog, Sowing Hope in Hearts Wounded by Addiction, is located at julietvanheerden.com. This article first appeared in the August 2016 issue of the Southwestern Union Record. It is reprinted with their permission and that of the author.

Making Time



MY HUSBAND AND I found ourselves on the counseling couch in Papua, Indonesia. It was funny what had led us there. As a pastor's wife for 21 years, I was on a quest to learn how to better listen to my husband. I knew that in ministry our husbands frequently carry heavy and confidential loads. I also recognized that sometimes when our husbands are wounded, it is we, the wives, who are left bleeding. My mission was to discover how to listen better—without bleeding out myself.

So in strength and confidence I met with some visiting psychologists and psychiatrists from the United States. I wanted to learn and glean from them. They *loved* my topic, but they also probed at my motivation. I admitted that being missionaries had been challenging. They listened empathetically and likened my husband to a “professional spear catcher.” How is that for a descriptive term? Perhaps you can relate. Does it sometimes feel as if your husband is catching spears from this direction and that? After listening to me, the counselors said they wanted to meet with my husband, Darron. Thus, we found ourselves on the proverbial counseling couch.

Honestly, Darron didn't feel the need. However, we have a saying in our ministry that “healthy people get help.” So, recognizing that we can always benefit from people speaking into our lives, we were there, on the couch.

After seeing and listening to Darron, the psychologists were quite surprised at how well Darron looked and at his perspective on his circumstances. They were very affirming of his stamina and the gift of determination and Boyd persistence that is a legacy from his father.

They asked what we do to maintain our marriage. I declared that in six weeks we had booked a three-week Airbnb all to ourselves during our furlough in Tennessee.

Take time to connect with your spouse each week—for the glory and honor of God.

Usually we spend 90 percent of our furlough with family and friends. The counselors admired us for creating this time but expressed concern about what we were doing to create space and time alone together prior to this vacation and upon our return to mission service.

Can you relate? It is difficult sometimes to find consistent time to date and be together as a couple. These psychologists, whose goal is to keep people in the field versus sending them home, challenged us to take time (at least once a week) to do something together as a couple in order to survive the spears being hurled at my husband. They commissioned us to do it for the “glory and honor of God.” To call it work time. To recognize that it was as vital as anything else we did. Wow. How insightful is that?

So for the next six weeks, we tried to be more intentional . . . but ministry is full, and so is a house of four boys and student missionaries going home. At last our awaited three-week furlough alone arrived. Months of anticipation equaled one frustrated wife who was dealing with a husband who had just broken his rib. I know this sounds horribly selfish, but I was so frustrated. He couldn’t run (a great way for us to keep off the weight from all the fun furlough food), he wasn’t in the mood to have fun, and everything hurt. Including my spirit. I really had to bring my attitude to the Lord and allow Him to put His spirit of love in me and minister to my disappointments.

Also, it sealed the importance of what our therapists had been trying to teach us: that we can’t wait for mountaintop experiences but must do the maintenance stuff all along. I know the Lord was gently trying to teach me this lesson through a hard thing.

There you have it. It’s not a pretty story. It’s a story mixed with grazed spear wounds and the struggle to find time to date in the fullness of life. I’m not proud of the story or my disappointed, selfish spirit.

Yet, we are growing, and I hope you can learn from us. I hope you will take time with your spouse each week to connect and relax in a fun and refreshing way, *for the glory and honor of God*. Let’s face it: ministry is hard, whether it be in a multiple church district, a thriving congregation, or a mission position. Satan would like nothing better than to wear us down and make us give up. Let us do our part to protect and restore the first love that we had for our spouse and unwind together. It will help us keep all the fiery darts of the devil in perspective. 7

*After 22 years as a pastoral and missionary spouse, **Ruth Boyd** feels she is finally emerging into the butterfly stage of her life. She loves writing and speaking, encouraging women in ministry, nursing, painting, going on adventures with her husband, and learning to “be still.” She currently serves in Papua, Indonesia, with her husband and two of her four sons. Her two other sons attend college in the United States.*



A Generation at Risk

IN A WORLD FILLED WITH BROKEN FAMILIES and vulnerable children, the Adventist Church is distinctively qualified to offer social support and holistic health. That message highlighted two plenary sessions presented by Dr. Kiti Freier Randall at the 2017 *Reach the World* conference in Budapest.

Randall, a pediatric neurodevelopmental psychologist from Loma Linda University Health, works extensively with at-risk children. In her talks she emphasized the role of the home in childhood development. "Although other supportive institutions in society play a role, it is in the family that nurture is effective and meaningful."

Randall contrasted that idyllic statement with the reality that children around the world are at risk from a great number of factors, including but not limited to malnutrition, abuse, lack of access to education, and obesity.

One of the risk factors Randall highlighted was technology addiction. "Too much, or misused technology can impact a child's physical and mental health," she explained, leading to negative impacts such as sleep disturbances, depression, and anxiety. To spontaneous applause from attendees, the pediatric psychologist challenged parents not to expose children under two years of age to technology. "It is wrong when technology is raising our children," she said.

“What they need, our church has to offer. Our church has all the elements that we need to change trajectory to a positive one.”

In her second presentation, Randall offered a bright spot to the daunting realities she began with. Science is focusing increasingly on the idea of resilience, “the capacity to maintain or develop competent functioning in the face of major life stressors.” Factors such as social support, connectedness, meaningful activity, and exercise all lead to increased resiliency.

Randall said that in her 30 years of working with the highest at-risk children in the world, she realized that “what they need, our church has to offer. Our church has all the elements that we need to change trajectory to a positive one. We have the ability to provide meaningfulness and hope in life. We have the ability to provide nurturance and relationship with healthy adults, and access to health activities. If you look at the scientific literature of what we need for resiliency in our children,” concluded Randall, “those can all be answered as a mission of our church, and I believe we’re called to do that, to give of our ourselves in a positive healthy relationship to spend time with young people and make a difference in their life.”

Mental health professionals in the audience agreed. “I completely agree with what Dr. Randall said,” shared Dr. Gabor Mihalec, a practicing family therapist and the director of Family Ministries for the host Hungarian Union Conference. “There has to be somebody who breaks this chain right here and right now. And I think that we as a church, we as pastors, as members, as family life educators have a very special gift and a very special opportunity to have insights into the lives of families where the things are happening.”

Costin Jordache is the director of communication and news editor for Adventist Review.





Will I Be Still?

We live in a noisy world.

Not long ago, as I sat at my desk to work, I became aware of the theme from *Family Feud* playing. I knew it couldn't be coming from our little apartment since we owned no TV or loudspeakers, plus I was home alone. When the floor started vibrating from the loud frequencies, it dawned on me that the sound was coming from our downstairs neighbors, who often turned the television all the way up.

I relocated to my husband's empty office, and not seconds after I made myself comfortable in his cushy swivel chair, a car alarm sounded. It rang through the air for a good while before being shut off. A truck then sped out of the neighboring community. I hoped the driver wasn't trying to be stealthy because the whole block easily heard it.

I thought that—just maybe—it was now my turn. My turn to have silence. However, people across the way started shouting, and a convenience store truck (I didn't even know those existed) started driving around wailing "The Entertainer" out of its built-in speakers. The downstairs neighbors started wrestling elephants, and an exceptionally long train drove by. Judging from the duration of the tones, I guessed that each train car had its own horn to toot.

We live in a noisy world—or at least I do.

Everywhere we go, noise bombards us. Music shouts from speakers in malls and croons to us in coffee shops. Passing vehicles offer their own purrs and vibrations. If your computer is anything like mine, it emits an almost constant breathy hum (maybe I should get that checked out . . .). Sometimes we create noise to muffle other noises—placing headphones over our ears or turning on fans at night to create white noise. Studies show that so much noise pollution might lead to higher blood pressure and increased risk of heart attacks.

Ears are not the only body parts affected by noise. Billboards bombard our eyes, as do magazine covers at the grocery check-out and all those texts, emails, and Facebook notifications. Product labels scream at us. Our noses constantly pick up aromas of exhaust, greasy food, perfumes, and plastics. Our minds are drowning in information as they process everything we take in, barely stopping for a break.

We live in a noisy world. Do you?

At one time in my life, noise was a constant friend. I could not stand *not* having something turned on in the background to keep me company, and every surface of my living space was filled.

It took me years to realize the sweetness of a peaceful moment. Now I take the time to seek silence. When I do this, my thoughts come back clearly and remind me that noises and clutter are mere distractions that keep me from hearing the soft and tender voice of God.

If you have been a Christian for a while (or seen those motivational nature pictures with script scrolled across a river), then you have heard or read these words from Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God" (NKJV). In such a noisy world, how is that even possible?

I always look to the example of Jesus when faced with such questions. Luke 5:16 says that He "often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed" (NKJV). And Mark 1:35 says that He rose long before sunrise and went to a solitary place to pray.

I don't know about you, but getting up before the sun is not always appealing to my human nature. However, I never regret spending quiet hours being still and listening to God's voice in the morning. No mental clutter. No distractions. No noise. I enjoy a certain peace found only in the morning, and the Lord quiets me there with his love (Zephaniah 3:17).

Take some time today, and every day, to be still with the Lord. Know that He is God. And, by meditating on Scripture, learn of Him and follow His example.

We live in a noisy world. Will we be still?



Amanda Walter is a teacher and happily married to her pastor-husband, Jonathan. They serve on Western Michigan's lakeshore. This article appeared in the August/September 2017 issue of *The Shepherdess Voice*, the official newsletter for ministry wives in the Michigan Conference, and on the Collegiate Quarterly blog, July 2017.

TIPS TO SURVIVE THRIVE

EVER FEEL LIKE YOU AREN'T GETTING ENOUGH time to read the Bible? Today's technology offers us an amazing blessing: the ability to listen to the Bible. Although not a substitute for alone time with God, audio Bibles allow you to listen on a smartphone or computer while cleaning the house, driving a car, exercising, washing dishes, or going to sleep at night.

Consider your day—can you think of any moments when you are “busy” but could still listen to the Bible? Your connection with God will deepen as you focus more on Him and His Word. Listening can help pass the time during a long commute, give you something profitable to think about rather than just letting your thoughts run wild while doing chores, and fill you with God's peace and joy. Your spouse or children may also be blessed by listening throughout the day, especially if they are auditory learners. (Many Ellen White books are also available in audio form through the EGW app or on the Internet.)

Let's not waste the precious moments of our days but fill them with God and His Word! “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8, 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

“Parents need not feel that it is necessary to repress the activity of their children, but they are to understand that it is essential to guide and train them in right and proper directions. These active impulses are like the vines, that, if untrained, will run over every stump and brush, and fasten their tendrils upon low supports. If the vines are not trained about some proper support, they waste their energies to no purpose. So it is with children. Their activities must be trained in the right direction. Give their hands and minds something to do that will advance them in physical and mental attainments.”

Child Guidance, p. 35

“The time spent in physical exercise is not lost. . . . A proportionate exercise of all the organs and faculties of the body is essential to the best work of each. When the brain is constantly taxed while the other organs of the living machinery are inactive, there is a loss of strength, physical and mental.

The physical system is robbed of its healthful tone, the mind loses its freshness and vigor, and a morbid excitability is the result.”

Adventist Home, p. 494

“God has provided for everyone pleasure that may be enjoyed by rich and poor alike—the pleasure found in cultivating pureness of thought and unselfishness of action, the pleasure that comes from speaking sympathizing words and doing kindly deeds. From those who perform such service, the light of Christ shines to brighten lives darkened by many sorrows.”

Adventist Home, p. 511

Don't Let Your Kids Read This



Screen exposure is eroding children's creativity and perhaps ours too.

When Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple, was asked what his kids thought about the iPhone, he said, "The kids don't use it. We don't allow it in the home."

And before you think that was an atypical tech titan response, a school in the Bay Area of San Francisco is almost entirely tech-free. It's called the Waldorf School of the Peninsula, and it doesn't allow iPhones, iPads, computers, etc. The school says that 75 percent of the kids there have parents who are tech execs in Silicon Valley.

So, what is it about screens that some of the wealthiest innovators in the world don't want their kids exposed to?

We are told that the prophet Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint the next King of Israel. As he arrived, he looked at seven handsome young men, all of whom appeared ready to be king. But the one that God had chosen was not the one Samuel would have expected.

"The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

So what was it about David that was preparing him to lead better than his brothers? The details we know show us that he spent a great deal of time in nature caring for animals and using his creativity to write and play music.

WISDOM: OLD AND NEW

Speaking about character development, Ellen White, who wrote a lot about best practices for raising children and educating them, says that Adam and Eve in Eden

were given "the occupation most favorable to development—the care of plants and animals" (*Education*, p. 43).

White also posits the radical idea that "the only school-room for children from eight to ten years of age should be in the open air, amid the opening flowers and nature's beautiful scenery. And their only textbook should be the treasures of nature" (*Christian Education*, p. 9).

Caring for plants and animals and spending inordinate amounts of time in the outdoors sounds revolutionary in a world of gadgets. So what's the concern with screens?

"I've worked with hundreds of heroin addicts and crystal meth addicts, and what I can say is that it's easier to treat a heroin addict than a true screen addict," says Nicholas Kardaras, author of *Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction is Hijacking Our Kids*.

Kardaras is one of the country's top addiction experts. In his book, he details how compulsive technology usage and reliance on screens can neurologically damage the developing brain of a child the same way that drug addiction can. Through extensive research, clinical trials with diagnosed screen addicts, and experience treating a variety of other types of addicts, the author explores the alarming reality of how children could be "stunting their creative abilities" by constantly turning on and tuning in.¹

If you're a parent or prospective one, that last line should arrest your attention. Could screen time in those formative years be stunting the life potential of a child? The answer seems to be yes.

Why is creativity so important? A study from Oxford University predicts 47 percent of jobs are at risk of being replaced by automation in the next twenty years. We

What is it about screens that some of the wealthiest innovators in the world don't want their kids exposed to?

need to make sure our children have a competitive advantage or even fighting chance to survive and thrive in the coming years in the global workforce. If automation is threatening half of our jobs, what will be the skill that sets us apart? Mark Cuban, American entrepreneur and billionaire, seems to believe that “employers will soon be on the hunt for candidates who excel at creative and critical thinking.”²

Parenting in today's world is no easy task. When the stresses of life are pressing in on all sides, it's just so easy to hand a child a smartphone or tablet and let them entertain themselves. Take video games, for example; do we know what is going on in that developing mind?

Kadaras says, “With video games, however, the kid sits and plays for hours of adrenal-elevated fight-or-flight. It is not a good thing. Research has shown that this latest generation of games significantly raises dopamine levels, the key neurotransmitter associated with our pleasure and reward pathways and the key neurotransmitter in addiction dynamics. One study showed that video games raise dopamine to the same degree that sex does, and almost as much as cocaine does. So, this combo of adrenaline and dopamine are a potent one-two punch with regards to addiction.”³

GOD'S SEAL—OR LUCIFER'S

And we all know the scenario too well. We see a kid who is so addicted to screens or games that they would rather enjoy their digital world than the real one. “The reason why this effect is more powerful on children than adults—although we all know of many adults who are screen-addicted—is that children still don't have a fully-developed frontal cortex, the part of the brain that controls executive functioning, decision-making, and impulse control.”⁴

Neuropsychologists now understand that the frontal cortex is the filter and command center that determines how we view the world and how we determine right and wrong. It's also the place where emotional intelligence is determined. Research has discovered that this part of the brain doesn't develop until our early 20s, and it may not fully develop until our mid to late 20s.⁵

I find that interesting because, in ancient Israel, a man could not be a priest until the age of 30.

“Research shows that both drug use and excessive screen usage actually stunts the frontal cortex and reduces the grey matter in that part of the brain. So hyper-arousing games create a double whammy. Not only are they addicting, but then addiction perpetuates itself by negatively impacting the part of the brain that can help with impulsivity and good decision making.”⁶

Often in Scripture, we find references to the forehead. God is putting his seal or mark there, or Lucifer is putting his mark there. The underlying concept is really talking about the pre-frontal cortex (i.e. the frontal lobe). It is the seat of judgment, morality, and character, in addition to creativity and critical thinking.

“The people of God are sealed in their foreheads,” writes Ellen White. “It is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved” (*Maranatha*, p. 200).

As we pass the baton of hope to the next generation, let's be as innovative as possible, even if that means we need to go back to the future. 7

¹ https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/how-screen-addiction-is-ruining-the-brains-of-children.

² <https://www.inc.com/betsy-mikel/mark-cuban-says-this-will-soon-be-the-most-sought-after-job-skill.html>.

³ https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/how-screen-addiction-is-ruining-the-brains-of-children.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Arain, M.; Haque, M.; Johal, L., et al. “Maturation of the Adolescent Brain.” *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*. 2013;9:449-461. doi:10.2147/NDT.S39776.

⁶ https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/how-screen-addiction-is-ruining-the-brains-of-children.

This article originally appeared in *Adventist Review* online, April 18, 2017.

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Rx: Gratitude

A DAILY DOSE NEEDED FOR IMPROVED
HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

STANDING IN LINE at the checkout counter of a local craft store, I happened to notice the couple behind me, primarily because both of them had their arms overloaded with baskets.

When I commented that it was a good day to take advantage of the special price on baskets, the man replied, "Oh, we always buy our supply of baskets this time of year, and what you see is only a portion of what we need."



The lady explained that at the end of each year they traditionally filled baskets with food and presents for their employees in appreciation for their hours of loyal service to the company.

He added, "Then we personally deliver the baskets to each employee's home."

Gratitude is "the quality of being thankful, a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness" (www.dictionary.com).

As children, one of the first things we are taught is to say "thank you" for the nice things people do. It's an inherent human tendency, even from a young age, to feel entitled to the attention and favors of those around us. Learning to say thank you is the beginning point for actually *feeling* thankful and grateful. As parents explain to their children why they should express gratitude, such as, "Say thank you to Grandpa for the fun you had with him at the park," children begin to associate happiness and success with gratefulness.

Ingratitude is one of the most disliked human characteristics and can cause permanent rifts in relationships, as well as discourage further acts of kindness. Gratitude, on the other hand, is a highly desirable quality that can make life more pleasant for everyone. Research shows that an attitude of gratitude can have overall health benefits, such as:

“Reflect on your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”

Charles Dickens

- Lowering blood pressure and heart rate
- Promoting more restful sleep
- Reducing cholesterol
- Lessening aches and pains
- Improving immune response
- Contributing to longevity
- Creating happier relationships
- Improving ability to focus on happy memories
- Encouraging a more optimistic outlook
- Improving self-image and self-care
- Enhancing thinking and decision-making skills
- Impacting one's career positively
- Promoting deeper spirituality



WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?

As we grow older our lives become more and more busy. It seems we have no time beyond caring for daily demands and responsibilities. We tend to spend needless mental effort trying to make sense of things that go wrong—our failures, missed opportunities, challenges with relationships, responses to change, crises, and uncertainties about the future. How does one fit gratitude into such a stressful existence?



START SIMPLE

Begin a gratitude journal. Take a few minutes to jot down just one positive event of the day—a meaningful moment with a family member, friend, or co-worker; a pleasant surprise (no matter how small); a problem solved; or an instance of encouragement.

Thinking about even just one blessing can encourage the awareness of another, and another, thus spiraling the mood upward toward calmness and joy. Stress, with all its harmful health risks, is lessened. Cognitive problem solving improves due to a more balanced emotional outlook. And gratitude, especially in the aftermath of a crisis, greatly improves recovery and resilience.

REMEMBER TO SAY “THANK YOU”

Long ago 10 men found themselves suddenly healed of leprosy as they headed to the temple to be examined by the priest. We happily applaud the one who turned back to find Jesus, falling at His feet with praise and thanks. For such an amazing miracle, we agree that thanks were certainly merited. Ordinarily, that may be our only thought about the incident. However, as with all Bible stories, this brief account carries important concepts if we examine a bit more deeply.

*“Feeling
gratitude
and not
expressing
it is like
wrapping a
present and
not giving it.”*

William A. Ward

1. Nothing good comes to us by chance. We daily experience encouragement, uplifting, and blessings by people in our lives. Add special moments, such as the glory of a beautiful sunset, healing from illness, safety in the midst of danger, peace in chaos, and answers to prayer, and we have a clear picture of a loving Heavenly Father who purposely and graciously orchestrates circumstances to aid and brighten life’s journey. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17, NIV).

2. Gratitude needs to be expressed. Studies show that people who feel appreciated and valued by a family member, supervisor, friend, or co-worker are often willing to go the extra mile for that person. By the same token, heaven responds to our expressions of gratitude by strengthening our faith to receive even more gifts from God, including joy and peace. “The soul that responds to the grace of God shall

be like a watered garden. His health shall spring forth speedily; his light shall rise in obscurity, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon him” (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 348). Ingratitude closes the mind to recognizing and being blessed by heaven’s multitude of gifts.

IN SUMMARY

Gratitude has a lot going for it. It means noticing with thankfulness life’s simple pleasures. It means shifting the focus from what our lives lack to being aware of how much we have. An attitude of gratitude has the potential to grow the more we express our thankfulness in word and deed, both to those around us and to God, who is the Giver of all good gifts. By habitually engaging in the gratitude habit, we can become happier, more resilient, healthier, and overall more pleasant people to be around.

RECOMMENDED READING:

1. Amy Newmark and Deborah Norville, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Power of Gratitude: 101 Stories about How Being Thankful Can Change Your Life*.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 348.

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 Helpful Critic?

FOR 30 YEARS I'VE LOVED listening to my husband preach, but, as he knows, after hearing hundreds of his sermons, I sometimes have a few ideas for how he could make a good sermon even better.

Most of the time, I keep my thoughts on improving his preaching to myself. After all, I'm not a theologian or a practiced pastor. But one Sabbath, as Steve and I were driving home from church, he asked, "So what did you think of the sermon?" I replied with an honest answer that focused exclusively on several points of improvement.

That day I learned that "sermonic improvement ideas" from a wife's perspective may be better received by our pastor husbands if we mingle "the bad with the good." It may even help, for the sake of our spouses, to put a little time between the sermon and the critique. Maybe wait until after Sabbath lunch before sharing our well-intended tips?


I have a feeling that if you've been a pastor's wife for even a short season, you have sometimes disagreed with your husband when he is in the pulpit or you are both out in public. What do you do? Does your husband really need a critique from his wife? Should you stuff your concerns or pipe up? I asked some seasoned pastors' wives for their thoughts and advice on this topic.

Many pastors' wives said they would talk with their husbands upon returning home if they couldn't let it go. One thoughtful wife said that "if" her husband asked for feedback, she would sandwich the negative with two good points. Many said they pray for their husbands when they are in the pulpit. Another insightful idea was to examine our own emotions first to see what the motive for our discomfort is. If legitimate, then approach the husband from that place rather than with criticism.

Sometimes pastors' wives with young children (and maybe not so young) feel that their husbands are preaching too long. One wife says she taps her watch to let her husband know if he is dragging. Renee mentioned that she once gave her husband the "cut-off sign," and he called her out from the pulpit! She said the congregation loved it; however, she will never do that again. Yet another pastoral couple has an agreed-upon sign to wrap up a topic if they are making each other uncomfortable.

More thoughts on this topic can be found in the little book *I'm More Than the Pastor's Wife* by Lorna Dobson. "Poor timing, for instance, bugging one's husband about a minor detail immediately following a service when he needs quiet, will only contribute to the wearing down of his spirit."

Lorna also tells how she wanted to correct her husband's grammatical weaknesses in his sermons; however, he seldom applied her corrections. In time, some of the church members (who had graduate degrees in language) sometimes chose to correct him. She discovered that he was more likely to take it from them than from her when she sounded like "constant dripping on a rainy day" (Proverbs 27:15).

Perhaps you are always in perfect harmony with your preacher. If not, I hope some of these thoughts will give you a fresh perspective on how to pray and support the man whom God has called you to stand beside. Blessings to each one of you as you serve so beautifully. I appreciate you all. 

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.

Talking About Social Media:

WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?



Mom, please, can I have a Facebook account?"

"No, you may not have a Facebook account."

"But you and Daddy have one! Can't I? Please?"

We had this conversation in our home with our preadolescent children more times than my husband and I care to remember. The conversation always ended the same way—the children disappointed and the parents feeling like bad guys.

Our generation has no parental reference point for these conversations. Facebook and other social media sites such as Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram are a recent phenomenon. We can't mentally flash back to our own childhoods and recall how our parents answered this question. The rise of social media sites may be recent, but their presence is pervasive, and it looks like social media, in some form, is here to stay.

Just how often is this conversation played out at dinner tables across America? A study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation indicates that it's happening a lot. Access to the Internet and smartphones has skyrocketed. Kaiser's 2009 survey of 8- to 18-year-olds found that kids spent an average

of 22 minutes per day on social media websites.¹ In the past decade total daily media use has grown to about nine hours for average teens (including social media, music, streaming, and other media use) and six hours for ages 8 to 12.

What is the impact of all this time spent on social media, and how should parents regulate their children's access to it? Different approaches are needed for children depending on their ages.

Congress has enacted a law that regulates communication with children on the Internet: the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). It's not legal, without parental consent, to gather information online from children under the age of 13. COPPA protects those who are socially and emotionally maturing—our children. Most social networking sites, Twitter and YouTube being exceptions, are restricted to people 13 years of age and older.

In spite of this, it has become common practice for parents to allow their children to falsify birthdates in order to gain access to Facebook and other sites. This places children in a social arena that they may not be able to navigate safely. It also clearly sends children the wrong message about the value of honesty.

THE BENEFITS

Are there benefits to social media? Arguably, yes. Social media is an extension of a young person's real-life social world. In 2006 a survey of Dutch adolescents found that positive remarks and comments on social media sites improved teens' self-esteem.² These sites can be convenient venues for children to communicate with friends and relatives, and can help to close the distance gap between children and far-away relatives.

In 2011 the American Academy of Pediatrics released a clinical report on the effects of social media on children. Dr. Gwenn S. O'Keeffe, the primary contributor, argues that social media can be beneficial to adolescents. Social media sites can improve a teen's technical skills and provide creative outlets for writing and music.³ They can be beneficial when they become an extension of a teen's already healthy and maturing offline social network.

THE PROBLEMS

For most parents it isn't the benefits of social media that immediately jump to mind—instead, we think of the many problems.

The child's safety is most parents' initial concern. The Internet offers a veil of anonymity for predators. The 14-year-old girl who "likes puppies" may in reality be a "snaggletoothed monster." The thought gives parents collective goose bumps.

As scary as the "creepy guy" is, the American Academy of Pediatrics study found that the most common risk teens face online is not from strangers but from their peers.⁴

A generation ago bullies were confined to the schoolyard and neighborhood back alleys. Now, with the rise of social media, our children can be bullied on social media sites right in the safety of their living room. Cyberbullying occurs when social media is used to share false, embarrassing, or threatening information against another person. It's a common casualty of social media sites and can result in depression, anxiety, and, tragically, even suicide.⁵ Information shared through social media can be seen by any number of people, and once created can be impossible to get rid of.

WHAT TO DO?

Social media is here to stay, so how do we as parents handle it? O'Keeffe argues that parents have an important role to play. We have to talk to our children and educate ourselves about the technology that they are using.⁶ A clear understanding of social media sites is the best way to become part of our children's online social world. Diving in headfirst and learning a site's privacy settings is imperative. We provide our children with ample driving lessons before we hesitatingly send them out onto the freeways. In the same way, our children should be amply prepared before being sent out on the information highway.

Parents in ancient Israel were instructed to talk to their children about God's plan for how they should live their lives. Our parental forebears were told to talk to their children when they were at home, when they were on the road, when they were getting up, and when they were going to bed.⁷ We now can add another time: when we are going online. The values and morals that we hope to instill in our kids each day need to be reinforced when we talk to them about their online social life.

Have a discussion about empathy with your children. Remind them of how our words and actions make others feel. Words that feel impersonal when typed on a computer keyboard can have a stinging effect on one of God's children. Remind them of God's plan for their lives—a plan that includes honesty, caring, and trustworthiness.

Previous generations have done much of their growing up in crowded academy hallways, on grassy fields, and behind cash registers on first jobs. Kids are still doing the same things, but they're also spending much of their growing-up time sitting behind computers and on smartphones.

You may not have a parental reference point for social media, but that's OK. You can make decisions about social media the same way parents have made decisions for their adolescents for generations. I don't know what the decision should be when your children ask about having a social media account. But I do know that the answer should begin with this: "Let's talk."



¹ V. Rideout, U. Foehr, and D. Roberts, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), p. 20.

² P. M. Valkenburg, J. Peter, and A. Schouten, "Friend Networking Sites and Their Relationship to Adolescents' Well-being and Social Self-esteem," *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 9: 581-590.

³ G. S. O'Keeffe, and K. Clarke-Pearson, "The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families," *Pediatrics*, March 28, 2011, pp. 800-804, retrieved from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/03/28/peds.2011-0054>.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 801.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 803.

⁷ Deut. 11:19.

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Becoming a Tech-smart Family

SIX YEARS AGO MY CELL PHONE only made voice calls. My latest phone is my computer, camera, calculator, diary, Bible, lesson quarterly, library, shopping assistant, bank manager, entertainment system, map, and so much more. My smartphone helps me organize my complex diary and stay in touch with my husband when plans change. We can chat by Skype when I'm traveling, see our grandchildren, and watch inspiring sermons and videos. We've even experienced our own personal marriage seminar through www.toucanttogether.com.

DANGEROUS DEVICES

But there is no doubt that our intensive use of technology, apps, games, and social media also carries incredible risks. Preschoolers are accidentally accessing pornography. Dangerous strangers are grooming our children. Teenagers are depressed and anxious because of the intense peer pressure exerted by social media, cyber-bullying, shaming, and sexting. The Internet is babysitting our children, and it has absolutely no interest in their well-being.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

Our pocket-sized devices have the power to take over our lives, create addictions, feed anxieties, destroy our innocence, drain our joy, and distract us from our relationships with God and each other. We don't have the wisdom of previous generations to help us navigate the ever-changing terrain of these incredibly helpful, yet highly dangerous, gadgets. It's hard to stay ahead of our children so we can guide and protect them because they're already running down the road ahead of us, exploring new possibilities beyond our imagination. We're living inside a huge social experiment with technology. And, by the time the scientists understand the complex consequences for our minds, health, relationships, and spiritual development, it will be too late to reverse the potentially catastrophic damage.

TAKING STOCK

We need to be wisely informed so we can protect ourselves and those we love from the invisible dangers that are tumbling out of the "Pandora's box" of hand-held technology. Start by reflecting on the effect that Internet/screen use is already having on your home, and discuss your ideas and concerns together.

- How many hours does each person spend on their devices (computers, phones, and tablets) daily, apart from work and homework?
- How do your family's devices enrich or damage your family life, relationships, well-being, spiritual life, ministry/service activities, and studies?
- What negative effects is your device usage having on your own life? What are you doing to address these effects?
- When is device usage most likely to be a problem in your home? What effect is this having on each person? What changes might be needed?
- In what ways are you managing the devices in your home well? What helps you to do this?
- How do your devices help you to live out your Christian values? How do they distract you from living out your values?

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Here are some biblical values to help us set wise boundaries around our devices.

- Philippians 4:8: Positive values help us evaluate which activities are true, pure, just, noble, lovely, virtuous, and worthy of our time and effort.
- Isaiah 26:3: Does our screen usage help us to experience peace and focus on God, or are many of our activities time-consuming, worrying, and overstimulating distractions?
- Romans 12:9-18: The wisdom in these verses gives us positive guidance for healthy relationships. How does our device usage affect our ability to love well, respond empathically to other people's emotions, show respect, and be kind and hospitable?
- Galatians 5:22, 23: How do our device activities enable us to live Spirit-filled lives?

TIPS FOR MANAGING SCREEN USE IN YOUR HOME

- Stay informed. Read helpful books by Christians, such as *Left to their Own Devices? Confident Parenting in a World of Screens*¹ and *The Tech-Wise Family*.²
- Access www.covenanteyes.com and download the free e-book *Parenting the Internet Generation*.
- Visit <http://www.vodafone.com/content/digital-parenting.html/#> for tips and ideas about helping your child to be strong and resilient in an online world.
- Research the games and apps that your children are using so you are familiar with the content and can help them make good choices.



Becoming a Tech-smart Family

- Check out parents' reviews of apps, videos, and games on www.pluggedin.com (Christian perspectives) and www.common sense media.org.
- Talk about the dangers of online pornography with your children as soon as possible. Use the book *Good Pictures, Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids*.³ This book explains the dangers of pornography in child-friendly language and offers a simple procedure for helping children respond appropriately if they accidentally access pornography.



- Be active together. Go for hikes, swim, row, or ski. Walking together in nature is a great way to have family adventures, learn practical skills, talk together, and be filled with wonder at God's real-life creation.
- Be a good role model. Use your own devices with integrity. Let children see that you shut down all your devices at a set time each evening.
- Be transparent. Spouses need to share passwords, and parents need access to children's phones and screens at any time to keep them safe.

- Monitor and review each person's usage. Keep bedrooms screen-free. Focus on developing internal values for managing screen activities rather than imposing external restrictions.
- Try some of the Get Real ideas in this issue's children's pages. Make these kinds of activities a regular part of your family routine. Spend time just hanging out together.
- Set ground rules as a family. For example, phones are gathered together in a charging zone when everyone comes home, and an hour before bedtime. In order to earn one hour of screen time each person must do a chore well, complete all homework assignments to the best of their ability, prepare and eat a meal together, have family worship, spend 15 minutes in physical activity and 15 minutes in a non-screen activity, such as a hobby. When all of these have been completed, the phones can be accessed for a set amount of time, but all the devices must be "put to bed" at least one hour before bedtime. See <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx> for how to create a family media plan. J

¹ Hill, K. *Left to their Own Devices? Confident Parenting in a World of Screens*. Muddy Pearl, 2017.

² Crouch, A. *The Tech-Wise Family*. BakerBooks, 2017.

³ Jenson, K. A. and Poyner, G. *Good Pictures, Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids*.

Karen Holford is director of Family Ministries for the Trans-European Division.

Living FOR REAL!

DO YOU LOVE PLAYING on a computer, tablet, or phone? Technology is very useful. It helps us learn, work, connect with each other, and share the good news of God's love with others. But, like many other good things, it can also stop us from learning, working, helping others, having fun family times, and worshipping God. When time with our gadgets gets in the way of time with God or family and friends, then we need to show them who is in charge! Put them down and have some real fun in the real world!

KEEPING DEVICES UNDER CONTROL

Have a meeting with your family and decide together on the best way to manage all the screens in your home. Some families say that children can use their devices for up to one hour a day, and only when they have done their homework, had dinner together as a family, had family worship, done at least one chore, and spent 10 minutes tidying their bedroom. Other families put all their devices "to bed" overnight, on a tray in the kitchen or locked away in a cupboard, so that everyone has a healthy night's sleep. What rules would help your family to stay in control of your screen time?

Here are lots of fun things to do FOR REAL—in the REAL WORLD, with REAL PEOPLE—because that's so much better than experiencing life through a small screen!





TREASURE HUNT

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. Hunt through your house and gather up all the loose coins. Ask the adults in your home to add their loose coins. Count them up and see if you have enough to pay for an ADRA gift at <https://giftcatalog.adra.org>. When you have enough money, ask an adult to pay for the gift. Then pray for the people who will receive your gift.



GRATITUDE RAINBOW

Read Psalm 100 or 107. Ask each person in your home to find six things they are grateful for. Each object must be a different solid color from the spectrum of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Lay all the items out in rows of color to make a rainbow. Not enough? Go and hunt for more! Then take a photograph.

HEAVENLY HOMES

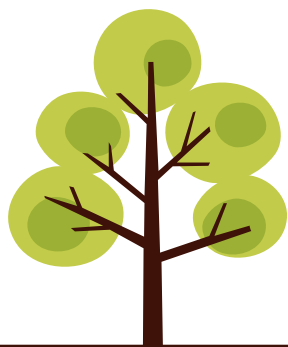
Read John 14:1-3. What do you think your home will look like in heaven? What do you have in your home on earth that you will still need in heaven? And what won't you need? Work together as a family to create an imaginary heavenly home in an old shoebox. Use your best glittery scraps and craft materials to decorate it.

GROWN UP SKILLS

Ask an adult in your home to teach you a useful life skill—something you need to know to be a safe and successful grown up. Make a list of important skills together and see if you can learn a new one every month.

KINDNESS WAS HERE!

Read Ephesians 4:32. Cut a stack of paper hearts, about 4 inches (or 10 cm) wide. Write on each heart "Kindness was here!" Give each person in your home 4-5 hearts. Whenever you do a secret act of kindness for someone, leave a heart to let them know. You could make a bed, clean shoes, tidy up, set the table, take out trash, etc.



FAMILY TREE

Ask your parents to help you make a family tree. Visit or call your relatives who are still alive. Ask them to tell you their favorite memories. Make a book of all their stories.





SLING SEVEN!

Read Hebrews 13:16. Find 7 good pieces of clothing or toys that you have outgrown or no longer need. Ask the adults in your home if you can give them to your younger siblings or donate them to a thrift store.



THANK YOU!

Write a thank you note or handmade card for each person in your family. Thank them for something they did that made you really happy. Tuck the card into their pajamas to surprise them at bedtime!



BIBLE OBJECT GAME

Find a small cloth bag or pillowcase. Hunt through your home for small objects that are mentioned in Bible stories (such as stone, seed, small piece of cloth, small coin, toy fish and bird, piece of net, toy sheep and cow, small candle, piece of wood, fake flower, small baby toy, toy tree, gold star, toy boat). Put all the small objects into the bag. Take turns pulling an object out of the bag without looking. Name a story that contains the object, put it back in the bag, and pass the bag to the next person. If objects are pulled out more than once, then a new story or Bible verse must be mentioned each time.



MAILBOX

It is more fun to get a real letter in your mailbox than a quick email. Write a proper, handwritten letter, in your best handwriting, to an elderly relative. Include a picture you have drawn, a bookmark, a poem or story, or a collage of pressed flowers and leaves. You will make their day! Writing letters to people can be a fun hobby, and maybe they will write back.

LOVE HUNT

Read Psalm 103. Search in your home for five things that remind you of God's love. Then show the items to your family and tell why you chose each one.

BUILD A HUT

Build a hut together. Many Jewish families build outdoor huts and live in them when they are celebrating the harvest. Try building a hut with your family, outside or in your home. Make it big and strong enough for everyone to sleep in for at least one night, and try cooking out there too.



I LOVE
YOU :

SAY IT
ON THE
SIDEWALK!

Use sidewalk chalk to write an encouraging message or Bible verse on the sidewalk near your home. Decorate it so people will notice and read it. Maybe you could write a different message each week so that people look forward to seeing your happy messages.



HELP!

Do something kind. Talk with your family about a simple project you can do together to help others. You are being God's hands and heart in the world! This is much more exciting than anything you can do on a small screen.

ACTION
STATIONS!

Doing screen stuff stops us from moving our bodies in healthy ways. Make sure you move and stretch whenever you can. Play your favorite praise music and create your own lively actions to illustrate the song.

CREATIVE REFLECTIONS

When you read a Bible story or a verse you especially like, create something to express your ideas. Making something, or writing down your ideas, will help you think about the Bible story in a fresh way. It doesn't have to be perfect, because this is just between you and God. Make a collection of craft and recycled materials to use for your projects.



EXPLORE OUTDOORS

Use wax crayons and copier paper to make rubbings of tree bark. Lay the paper over the bark. Hold it still and rub the side of the wax crayon over the paper. It will reveal the pattern of the bark. Do this on several different trees to compare their textures. Or turn over a rotting tree trunk and look for all the creepy crawlies underneath. Mark off a small square of ground and see how many different plants, creatures, and stones you can find in the space. Look at the stars at night and see how many constellations you can find and name. Praise God for all the amazing REAL stuff He's made.

BIBLE SCENE

Use your construction toy sets to make a scene from a Bible story. See if you can guess each other's stories. No bricks? Use whatever you can find, or bits and pieces from nature.

Please email us (or write us a real letter!). Tell us your family's favorite ways to manage screen time. And what are your favorite FOR REAL activities?



Karen Holford loves having real fun with her three young grandchildren.

Dear Deborah,

My husband is involved with a very active church plant. He is gone all the time, leaving me and our two children home alone on a regular basis. While I am very excited about the growth this church is experiencing . . . it has transformed our schedule and home life to say the least. I am thrilled with the endless opportunities that accompany this wonderful adventure. I love watching my husband engaging in this ministry, but deep down I am very lonely and miss our life before “the plant.”

How can I continue my enthusiasm and support while struggling with these feelings?

*Sincerely,
Flying Solo*

Dear Flying Solo,

I recently listened to a “seasoned” pastor’s wife describe a similar scenario. She described how the loneliness had set in very early in their pastoral ministry. She shared the woes of missing her husband and the disappointments of limited family time.

She faced two options. The first: continue in hopes that the lonely times would get easier. The second: discuss with her husband the possibility of a new schedule. She chose the latter.

Believe it or not, her husband was completely unaware of her feelings about the schedule. He immediately made necessary changes and delegated some responsibilities to prospective leaders. It was a win-win situation for the family, the church plant, and the new leaders!

In most cases like yours, a heartfelt talk may alleviate many real and perceived concerns. Then try some of the following ideas for times your husband must meet ministry commitments:

1. Get together weekly with other leaders’ wives for fellowship, study, and prayer.
2. Set “play-dates” with your friends and their children.
3. Bake bread or other homemade items to share with your neighbors.
4. Join your husband whenever possible as he fulfills his responsibilities.

When we work together and encourage each other, we can further the ministry of our husbands and expand the kingdom. We belong to a special calling, a collective group of women called to serve God as the wives of pastors.

Blessings as you serve!
Deborah

Inter-European Division

Pastoral wives in Romania attended a convention entitled “Copilot to Heaven.” More than 130 spouses attended presentations about the Bible, raising children, relating to adolescents, forming leaders in the church, and other topics. As pastoral spouses, we are all part of the same service family, and we need the support of those who share the same struggles. The Great Pilot wants to lead each pastoral wife beyond the clouds to a place of light and splendor, where she can be a blessing.



Pastors' spouses from North Transylvania Conference.



Pastors' spouses from Oltenia Conference.



Pastors' spouses from South Transylvania Conference.



Pastors' spouses from Moldova Conference.



Romanian pastors' spouses pray together.



Pastors' spouses from Mutenia Conference.

Northern Asia-Pacific Division

In October 2017 the Ministerial Spouses Association of Mongolia Mission distributed sewing machines to 29 pastoral homes. The sewing machines will be used to promote the gospel through practical endeavors while also blessing the pastoral family. Funds for the project were raised by holding bazaars and praying diligently. Generous sponsors from Korea and the United States helped provide for this project. Please pray for pastoral spouses in Mongolia as they look for ways to bless their homes, churches, and community.



Mrs. Sun Hwa Shin, coordinator (right), Mongolia Mission Ministerial Spouses Association, presents one of the sewing machines.



Grateful recipients receive sewing machines.



Mongolia Mission president (seated, second from right) with Mrs. Shin and several pastors and spouses.

Southern Asia Division

SOUTH ANDHRA SECTION

The South Andhra Section held a one-day Shepherdess training program with 35 pastors' spouses attending. The program included a session on the role of pastors' wives and being a virtuous wife. Spouses also spent time exercising, witnessing, and enjoying good food.



South Andhra Section Shepherdess group gathers with beloved leaders Mrs. Sofia Wilson from SUD and Mrs. Krupa Victor from ECIU.

FROM THE FIELD

WESTERN INDIA UNION

In June 2017 the Western India Union Shepherdesses held an advisory in Pune. They were encouraged by SUD president, Pastor Wilson, that “prayer and Bible study are the foundation of spiritual life for every pastor’s wife.” The meetings ended with a consecration service.



Mrs. Sofia Wilson presents seminars on “Virtuous Women” and “A Woman After God’s Own Heart” in Pune.



A dedicatory prayer was offered for the women in Pune.

SOUTH CENTRAL INDIA UNION

South Central India held a Shepherdess advisory in 2017. Various speakers did presentations on the theme “Chosen to Serve.” The Shepherdesses were encouraged to choose what to do with their calling. The meetings ended with a consecration service and prayer.



The advisory included a special candle lighting program.



Shepherdesses meet in South Central India.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division



Shepherdess leaders gather in Cambodia.

West-Central Africa Division

In December 2017, ministerial leaders from South Sudan met in Uganda. This was their first opportunity to get together as a group. We praise God for the special time of fellowship they enjoyed.



Shepherdesses from South Sudan gather in Uganda.



South Sudan pastoral couples meet in Uganda.

In February 2018, Shepherdesses from Cameroon met together for ministerial meetings.



Shepherdesses hear presentations in Cameroon.



Shepherdesses meet in Cameroon.

10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

A DEEPER EXPERIENCE

January 9–19, 2019

“And this is eternal life,
that they may know
You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom
You have sent.”

JOHN 17:3, NKJV

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