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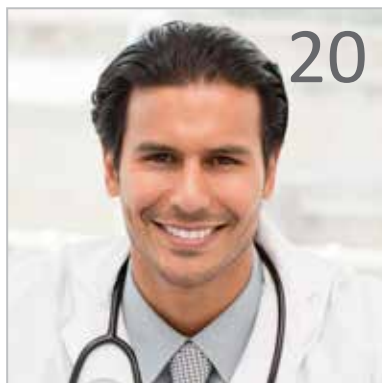


CHURCH
alive



ON THE COVER

When we hear the sounds of children in our church sanctuaries, should we feel irritated—or assured that our church is “alive”? To learn ways to help your church provide a happy, safe, and growing experience for your children, read this issue’s compelling cover story, “Church Alive”.



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I FELT VALUED

WHEN I WAS 12 YEARS OLD, some church members included me in their conversations with my parents. With welcoming smiles, they looked me in the eye, asked or said my name, and talked to me.

I felt important.

My earliteen Sabbath School class was asked to plan weekly Sabbath vesper programs.

I felt needed.

A year later, we were asked to organize the adult Sabbath School program once a month. While this idea was risky, the members realized that kids need to be involved.

I felt valued.

When we moved to another city and a much larger church, I got lost in the crowd. So I joined the other teens in the back row talking and giggling.

I was disconnected.

A while later, a school leader asked me to coordinate the Sabbath afternoon academy outreach programs. I had never attended the outreach activities, nor am I sure that they even had any going on before I became involved.

I became a passionate follower of Jesus.

As a young adult, my friend and her friends offered to help with church programs by playing the piano, taking up the offering, being greeters, helping with the worship service—anything that was needed. No one got them involved.

She and her friends left church.

Do you know a young person who doesn't want to come to church? Ask them what their interests are, and then find how best to fit those interests with the needs of the church. Give them assignments—to run the sound system, read the Scripture passage for worship service, take up the offering, play the piano, or sing on the worship team for church. Make them deacons and deaconesses under strong mentors. Add young people to the church board.

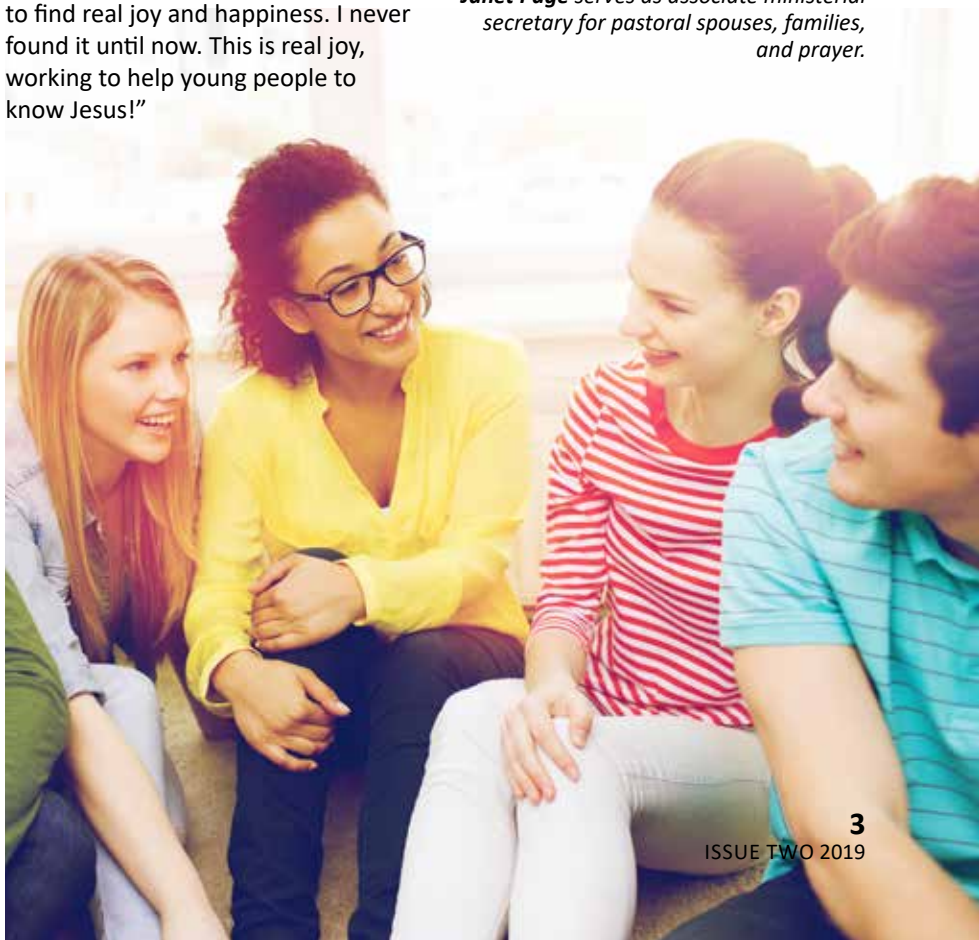
They will become an integral part of your church, look forward to Sabbath, and become leaders for God.

My son learned this lesson firsthand. After joining a youth evangelism team, he said, "I have tried everything to find real joy and happiness. I never found it until now. This is real joy, working to help young people to know Jesus!"

Teens are hungry for acceptance and belonging. Pray earnestly for your youth. Ask each young person what they like to do and how they want to be a part of the church family. Put them into positions of responsibility with reliable, Christ-like mentors.

In the parable in Matthew 20 about workers in the vineyard, the eleventh-hour workers were asked why they were just standing around. They said, "Because no one has hired us" (Matthew 20:7a, NRSV). Our youth are willing and able, but they haven't been asked! Will you help your church youth find their place in God's vineyard? Not only will it bless others, but it will also bring that young person into a closer walk with the vineyard Owner. J

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





MAKE YOUR LOCAL CHURCH A BETTER PLACE FOR CHILDREN.

NERVOUSLY I WALKED INTO our small country church for the first time. My husband was being introduced as pastor of the two-church district, and it was my first Sabbath juggling our 14-month-old son and 5-year-old daughter alone.

The historic structure wasn't equipped with a special room to escape to with my toddler, and he could easily be heard from anywhere in the sanctuary. I was so concerned about the disruption it might cause that I hardly heard the sermon. After the service an older, soft-spoken gentleman approached me. "You know," he said, "I used to get a little irritated by noise from kids during the sermon. But now I enjoy it! It means our church is alive." The members embraced our children with love, and we felt we'd found our home.

Yes, our church *is* alive. As of 2014, more than 1,796,000 children under the age of 15 were found in our congregations.¹ This energetic group is the future of our movement. What are we doing to prepare them to take the helm? How are we ministering to them and raising up leaders?

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

During His ministry on earth, Jesus spent considerable time with children. He recognized important character qualities in them. While talking with His disciples, Jesus admonished, "Unless you are converted and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3, HCSB). Children are tenderhearted, not yet jaded by a critical spirit. They are sensitive, simple, and accepting. If the seeds of truth are planted in the soil of their heart and cultivated while they are still young, "when [they are] old, [they] will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, KJV).

“Unless you are converted and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:3, HCSB

Developing a solid children’s ministry program in your congregation is important for several reasons. First, it acts as a support system for parents as they seek to disciple their children. Second, it provides a secure environment through weekly Sabbath School and other programs for children to develop a relationship with Jesus. Third, it offers training opportunities to develop leadership qualities in the youth. Fourth, it gives children occasion to use their talents and gifts in service to others. Let’s explore these a bit further.

A SUPPORT SYSTEM

As a parent, my goal for my children is for them to have a personal, living relationship with Jesus. I want them to learn to love His church and find their identity in being a Seventh-day Adventist Christian preparing to meet Jesus. I want them to be faithful, not just in church attendance but in lifestyle, tithing, and devotion. I want them to be mission-minded, not simply maintain the status quo.

An efficient, well-oiled children’s ministries program can help parents, like me, with these goals. Local church children’s ministries coordinators should talk with families, assess needs, and convey all concerns to the pastor and board. Programs such as children’s prayer meeting, baptismal classes, children’s choir, youth Sabbath or children’s church, youth retreats, or Vacation Bible School can then be planned and will be opportunities for children to grow and learn in an age-appropriate atmosphere.

A SECURE ENVIRONMENT

According to *The Children’s Ministries Coordinator* handbook: “Children are individuals with emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and mental needs. They are not miniature adults. They all need love and care. They need to be free to play, explore, create, and express themselves. They need to be instructed with the right values and be challenged to learn and master new skills and knowledge. When they are in our care, we need to offer a safe environment where children feel welcomed, valued, and accepted.”²

Church should be a safe place for all ages, but especially for our children. In this age of rampant abuse, it is our duty to protect them and surround them with an environment of trust. Children feel secure when they are loved unconditionally. They respect church members who take the time to listen, who truly take an interest in them. Members should show children appropriate attention, but also familiarize themselves with church policy regarding appropriate interaction with youth. Children’s ministries can provide education on what is proper.

RAISING UP LEADERS

Another facet of children’s ministry provides opportunities for children to discover their talents and abilities. Children can be involved in every aspect of the Sabbath service, from leading songs, collecting offering, and reading Scripture to delivering the Sabbath sermon. This enables them to take ownership of their church, becoming an integral part of the growth and life of the congregation. It requires some effort on the part of church leaders to coordinate programs and provide mentoring to young people, but what better place to invest their time and wisdom?

Some congregations dedicate a special Sabbath every quarter as children's church or youth Sabbath. The entire service is planned by youth, with guidance from children's ministries and/or Pathfinder leaders, as well as a youth pastor, if the church has one. This is a fantastic outreach opportunity! One of the teens in our church invited her family and friends who were nonmembers to come listen to her special music. They attended and were blessed by the program.

Leadership qualities can also be cultivated by involving youth in service-based ministries. These offer hands-on, tangible experiences for them to "establish a pattern of outreach . . . that may well continue through life."³ Children are fearless. They'll knock on a door and leave a brochure; they'll ask for donations of food for the hungry; they'll ask a stranger if they'd like to be prayed for. And they'll get results!

Children around the world are finding their voice, preaching, teaching, and witnessing for Jesus. Imagine if they had never been given the opportunity to use their gifts.


TODAY'S CHALLENGE

We live in a consumer-driven culture. The attitude "What's in it for me?" has polluted the church too. The happiest congregations, those that are growing and retaining members, are missional in nature, not looking for what they can get out of church but what they can contribute.

In the same way, my child's spiritual happiness is not the responsibility of the Sabbath School superintendent, pastor, or children's ministries coordinator. Those leaders are there to offer support, assistance, and grace-filled programming for me to take advantage of, but ultimately, as the parent, it is my God-given responsibility.

We can have the most child-friendly church in the world with the most engaging programs, but if we are not training our children to love and obey Christ (instilling within their hearts a desire to know and serve Him) at home, future church attendance for them will become irrelevant. Instead of creating disciples, we will have fashioned Adventist consumers who sit idly occupying a pew each week, completely disconnected.

So, how are we preparing our children to be true leaders and find their place in the church? By building a solid biblical foundation at home, by taking advantage of church support and programming, and by providing them with a secure, nonthreatening environment to stretch their wings.

If you'd like more information on organizing a children's ministry in your church, visit www.gcchildmin.org. 

¹ Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *2016 Annual Statistical Report*, p. 8, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2016.pdf>.

² *The Children's Ministries Coordinator*, p. 13, www.gcchildmin.org/pdf/chmcoordinatorbook/chapter6.pdf.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7, www.gcchildren.org/pdf/chmcoordinatorbook/entirebook.pdf.

Beth Thomas is a freelance writer now living abroad. She is a happy wife and mother of two future leaders. This article originally appeared in Adventist World, NAD edition, May 2017.



TIPS TO SURVIVE

THRIVE



STEPS TO BRINGING PEACE FROM CONFLICT

One morning I delivered our daughter's lunch to her fourth-grade classroom. After knocking on the door I heard the teacher approach, but she was speaking angrily and harshly to one of the children. When she saw me, she turned and said in a sweet and loving voice, "Tonya,* your mother is here to see you."

Later that day I asked Tonya, "Who was the teacher speaking to when I came to the door?" Tonya said the teacher had been speaking to her. This was not the first time this teacher had been unkind to our daughter. What could I do, both to put an end to the verbal abuse and also to help the teacher? Here are 10 biblical suggestions for solving interpersonal problems:

Hebrews 4:16 and James 1:5 say we should begin with prayer and preparation.

Matthew 7:3-5 reminds us that the problem may be on our part. Perhaps Tonya had been irritating the teacher by her words or actions. In that case, I should also talk with Tonya to guide her into asking Jesus for help.

Galatians 6:1 advocates that we seek to restore the relationship in the spirit of gentleness. It also prompts us to consider our own feelings lest we become swayed into defending our child and our point of view.

Matthew 18:15 tells us to go personally to the individual involved. We should initiate the reconciliation process.

James 4:10 tells us to humble ourselves before God. We should also ask Him to make us humble when speaking to the other person.

Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that a soft answer turns away anger. Anything I say should be couched in kindness and a desire to restore relationships, not just to "win."

Romans 14:19 advocates that we do all we can to become peacemakers.

2 Corinthians 13:11 tells us to be of "one mind" so that the end result can bring about an agreement between all parties.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27 advocates that we maintain unity, for without it everyone suffers.

* Not her real name

7



Beyond Dirty Feet

THE FOOT-WASHING PART of Communion service is hard for me as an introvert because it requires awkward social interaction. The actual washing part is easy. Looking for a partner, however, is almost as terrifying as asking someone out on a first date. It's worse on the days I play the piano for church service because I reach the room after everyone has paired up. So I end up making excuses to myself for not taking part in the foot washing.

My dad once told me, "There is nothing remarkable about washing your friend's feet; washing your enemy's feet is much more meaningful." That inspired me to look beyond myself and wash the feet of ladies I hadn't spoken with much before. I learned so much, and many experiences touched me. Each person has a unique washing style: some women are really chatty and almost gossipy; a few are gentle and soothing; others give a hard massage, then briskly rub your feet with the towel; still others quietly pray for you.

I began looking for people who didn't have a partner, often asking those still seated in the sanctuary after I finished playing the piano. More often than not I'm greeted with rejection because that person just wants to be left alone. But once in a while there's a grateful shy smile of a fellow sufferer who didn't know whom to ask.

And then there is this humbling story that my friend shared on her Facebook page. It took place a few years ago when she was a new convert:

"Last Sabbath we had Communion service at church. It was my first Communion at this church, and a nice woman led me to where the ordinance of humility was to take place. As we washed each other's feet I told her about my first-ever Communion, not only as a Seventh-day Adventist but also the first time in my life.

Special Quotes

"I remember being curious that day at church about the neat row of enamel basins filled with water and placed at the back of the church. I picked up a bulletin from the entrance and read that it was Communion day. *Ah, my first Communion ever!* I thought, and felt very excited.

"I knew what Communion was and had seen people receive it in other churches, but I was confused when the pastor said, 'Now we shall separate for the foot washing. Ladies to the room at the back on the right-hand side, and gentlemen on the left.' I thought, *So that's what the basins are for*, and my heart sank! My initial enthusiasm vanished. I didn't want anyone to wash my feet, because after taking two buses and walking for 20 minutes in sandals to get to church, my feet were in terrible condition. Had I known about this I would have washed them using the tap outside before entering the church.


"Everyone began to move toward the rooms, some in pairs, and I sat huddled in a corner not knowing what to do and hoping no one would notice me. I was looking down trying to memorize the hymnbook, making myself look as small as possible, when I heard a soft, kind voice say to me, 'May I wash your feet?' I looked up to see the beautiful woman who had been playing the piano.

" 'I . . . I . . . er . . . ' I tried to think of something to say. Finally, I said slowly in shame, 'But . . . they're . . . umm . . . rather dirty.'

"She smiled and said, 'Well, that's the whole point of foot washing.'

"And she washed my feet, praying silently over each foot as if there was no greater privilege on earth than to be able to wash my dirty feet.

"Friends, isn't it amazing to be part of God's family?"

It's still difficult for me to participate in the foot washing ceremony. But what blessing might I miss out on if I skip for my own selfish reasons? It is only when we shift the focus away from ourselves that we learn the true meaning and significance of foot washing in the Communion service and learn to be examples of Christian love. 

Cheryl Howson is an interior designer, currently living in Hosur, India, where she plays the piano for her moms' choir in church. She lived in Sri Lanka for twelve years, where the events of this story took place.

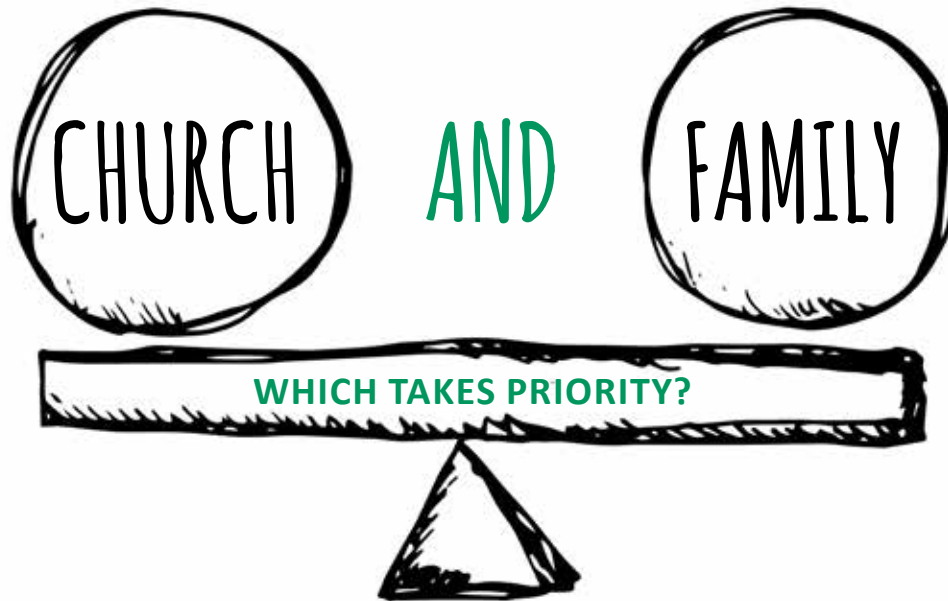
It is because so many parents and teachers profess to believe the word of God while their lives deny its power, that the teaching of Scripture has no greater effect upon the youth. At times the youth are brought to feel the power of the word. They see the preciousness of the love of Christ. They see the beauty of His character, the possibilities of a life given to His service. But in contrast they see the life of those who profess to revere God's precepts.

—*Education*, p. 259.

It is one thing to treat the Bible as a book of good moral instruction, to be heeded so far as is consistent with the spirit of the times and our position in the world; it is another thing to regard it as it really is—the word of the living God, the word that is our life, the word that is to mold our actions, our words, and our thoughts. To hold God's word as anything less than this is to reject it. And this rejection by those who profess to believe it, is foremost among the causes of skepticism and infidelity in the youth.

—*Education*, p. 260.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF



WHAT DO YOU DO when your spouse's job interferes with family plans? As pastors' spouses, we've all faced or will face this dilemma. By nature our pastoral spouse's job is 24/7. And we know that he or she is doing a special work for the Lord. So how do we "compete" with that? What should be our response when our spouse is called on during an inconvenient time for the family?

This question is difficult to answer because each situation is unique. Are children involved? What are their ages? How often does it happen? Can someone else step in? I personally still struggle with this, and the ideas presented here are as much for me as for anyone reading this!

ESTABLISHING IMPORTANT ROUTINES

First, we have to make sure we have a "sure foundation." Is our own spiritual life being fed? Is our devotional life consistent? Do we have family worships?

Next is our family life. Are we regularly taking a day off together? If this is part of our routine, an occasional interruption won't be nearly as hard to take, since the "bank" will have funds to draw on. If these two areas of our lives are in place, scheduling conflicts won't be nearly as much of a dilemma. However, when an interference does come, what do we do?

“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.”

1 Peter 2:20

WHEN CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED

Most often the conflict is heightened when children are involved. Involving the kids in the decision helps. One year my family planned a weekend away for spring break. We were going to the lake for a much-needed vacation. But then a former church member from a family we were close to died. The family asked Bob to help with the service. Since he was no longer their pastor, Bob felt comfortable telling them “no” because it was family vacation time and their current pastor would be there.


When we told the kids about the situation, however, they said, “Dad, you *have* to do it!” They knew how much the family had done for us and wanted to pay them back in a meaningful way. Knowing that Dad would have said “no” gave them the freedom to give that as a gift from their own hearts. If Dad had made the decision on his own to go, I’m not sure they would have been so willing. If kids can learn that their sacrifices are gifts to God, it will help them see things in a different light. It will also help them think of what they would want if they were the person needing the pastor.

One thing I’ve learned is that my kids will usually reflect the attitude I have. If they are getting disgusted or frustrated with Daddy, is that attitude coming from me? If I can have a positive outlook, it will help me to explain to them what is happening in a manner that won’t turn them off from church or the “work.” But how do I acquire that positive attitude? A quote that has really helped me is from *The Ministry of Healing*: “The Father’s presence encircled Christ, and

nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. Whatever comes to him comes from the Savior, who surrounds him with His presence. Nothing can touch him except by the Lord’s permission. All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, in short, all things work together for our good. All experiences and circumstances are God’s workmen whereby good is brought to us” (pp. 488, 489).

I encourage you to read *The Ministry of Healing*, chapter 41, “In Contact With Others,” in its entirety. You’ll find many good points about whom to go to when we suffer, how to relate to the burden bearer (our spouse), and how to deal with difficult people.

Also encouraging to me is 1 Peter 2:20-24: “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (NKJV).

I like to sing the hymn “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.” When I look to Jesus and see what He suffered for me, it definitely puts my trials into perspective. When I pray and give the problem to God, what a peace can fill my soul. I’m praying that peace is yours too! 

Elsena Benson has been married to her husband, Bob, for 30 years.

She is a PK, and they have three grown PKs. Elsena is a registered nurse but has chosen to be a homemaker. She volunteers at a free medical clinic, at their Adventist school, at Strong Tower Radio, and at their three churches. Her greatest love is studying the Bible, but she also enjoys walking and reading. Elsena happens to LOVE winter!



IS SOCIAL MEDIA CONSUMING YOUR LIFE?

LET'S FIND A SOLUTION.

STUDIES REVEAL THAT WE CHECK our smartphones a lot. Different studies show we may check them as many as 47—or 150—or even 300—times a day. Research also shows that every time we get a “like” or a notification, we’re hit with a dose of dopamine, which is also what happens when people use and abuse caffeine, alcohol, sugar, drugs, shopping, sex, video games, online porn, power, or gambling. Dopamine is known as the “feel good” hormone, and it can lead to addictions.¹

I love using my smartphone, but lately I’ve been asking, “Is my smartphone use becoming addictive?”

As Christian leaders, we have to be honest with ourselves about this subtle device that we hold in our hands.

Louie Giglio in a podcast called “Don’t Waste Your Time”² shared the following:

- The average American lives 75 years.
- Twenty-six of those years are spent sleeping.
- Seven years are spent trying to fall asleep!
- Eleven years are spent working.
- Five years are spent surfing the Internet.
- Four years are spent looking at our phones and interacting with social media.

“Even though digital communication has its place, there is a much greater real-life, daily adventure that God has planned for you!”

Unbelievable! Are we disappearing into the portals of our phone?

I write out of the conviction of my own heart—not to pass along guilt, but rather to raise awareness. If I want to connect more with my heavenly Father and with my family and friends, I need to be intentional about minimizing interference.

How much of heaven am I missing by watching trivial things on my cell phone or getting lost in the world of Pinterest or Facebook or Instagram?

When we intentionally put our phones away for a time, we’re more likely to talk with others, take in the scenery, be more productive, and live a life that is fully alive. So will you join me in facing this issue honestly?

In her podcast *Set Apart Girl*, Christian author Leslie Ludy says, “Even though digital communication has its place, there is a much greater real-life, daily adventure that God has planned for you! So put down your phone, close your computer, and open your eyes to see the people that He has placed right in front of you today. Don’t waste your life in a virtual reality. Live in a real world. Learn the art of face-to-face communication—the hands-on gospel work. Facebook, texting, and Instagram should never dominate your life. Those things will not last for eternity—so don’t build your life around social media; build your life around Jesus Christ.”³

¹ Learn more at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brain-wise/201209/why-were-all-addicted-texts-twitter-and-google>.

² <https://www.meek.ly/sermons/louie-giglio/don-t-waste-your-time>.

³ <https://setapartgirl.com/podcasts/set-apartness-in-social-media>.

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.

MARRIED TO A PASTOR?
Discover a safe place to fellowship, ask questions and learn from others on Facebook and Twitter!

DISCUSS SHARE CONNECT

Official groups for Ministry Spouses online: ministerialspouses @ministryspouses



Children in the Glass House

“SHHH!” I WHISPERED for the hundredth time. I glanced at my watch as my two young daughters squirmed and wiggled during church. I tried to keep a pleasant look on my face, but I was getting frustrated!

It was our first Sabbath in our new district. We had moved into a small house earlier in the week, and the girls were sharing a bedroom for the first time in their short lives. Sharing is a virtue I hold in high esteem, but having two youngsters share a room for the first time and then having to be the model family after much sleeplessness was taking its toll on them—and me.

I glanced down and saw one daughter scooting under the pew, and I just about lost my put-together appearance! The church comprised mostly older people who had long ago forgotten the feeling of a harried parent sitting in church with two little children. Most of them had no idea what it was like to sit alone trying to keep them occupied—while my husband was preaching.

Finally the closing prayer was over, and I leaned over to gather all my things before exiting the sanctuary. As if being released from an invisible restraint, my daughter hopped up on her knees and looked over the back of the pew. Just then, I heard a woman in the row behind me lean up to my daughter and tell her in a hushed but loud tone, “You were very naughty in church today! You should sit still and be quiet!”

I spun around and looked this woman in the face. She had a pasted-on smile, but a scowl was lurking behind her eyes. “I can see you have your hands full!” she stated as she walked out of her pew.

Blinking back my tears, I picked up our bag and smiled as we walked out. I couldn’t cry here. I still needed to meet the people in our new congregation and hope that my children wouldn’t cause any more scowls. After all, the girls were only 18 months and 4 years old!

The next week at church I made sure to sit on the other side of the church from the scowling woman, and later learned that in three weeks she would be going to Arizona for the winter. *Phew!* Maybe we'd be more settled by the time she came back. Also, that next week another woman came and sat with me during the service.

"I'm sure it must be hard to be alone in the pew with the girls, so I'm going to sit with you every week!" she said as she took my oldest on her lap. She pulled out a coloring book and some new crayons and then patted me on the back. I smiled and brushed away tears of gratitude. Little did I know that she would be there every week for three years.

Fortunately, the comments of the first woman have long been lost on my children. The deeds of the second woman, however, have lived in infamy as we've kept in contact and exchanged pictures and visits over the years. She is the one my children remember and not the critical woman.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER FAMILIES?

My children are much older now and can comfortably sit still through the entire church service, but I think about all the other pastors' kids out there. A woman in one of our churches once asked why we'd want to raise our children in a pastor's home. (As if I would adopt them out just because my husband is a pastor!) But I looked at her and said, "Because I was raised in a pastor's home, and I wouldn't trade it for anything!" She shook her head and told me she had been raised in one too, but that she had hated every minute of it.

As I thought about this, I realized that when I was a child, I never thought my family was any different from the other people in church. Sure, we had to be at all the meetings and didn't miss a Sabbath, and we got to go to camp meeting for two weeks instead of one, plus worker's retreat to play in the lake for a week—but other than that, we were just like everyone else. No one (that I knew of) expected me to act differently because I was the pastor's daughter. I never knew what a glass house was!

Now as a parent of pastor's kids, I wonder how well I'm raising my children as "normal" kids without extra expectations. Sure, I have expectations as a parent, but they wouldn't be any different if my husband had a different occupation. We want our children to love Jesus and to make Him first in their lives. We want them to be involved in the church and find ways to minister. We want them to be an example in school and Sabbath School and at the store. We want them to want to go to heaven and to live a life that will reflect that desire.

GOD'S HEDGE

As I watch my children grow and mature, I pray that God will put a hedge around them to keep them safe from the critical words of people. Safe from the harmful effects of bad associations. Safe from the influence of people who just want to have fun and don't see the need to listen to Jesus.

In the book of Hosea we have a beautiful story of God's love for Israel even after they continually fall away from Him. Through Hosea God tells His wayward people, "I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now'" (Hosea 2:6, 7, NKJV).

Ministry families feel different from others because of the many demands upon their time and emotions. But I know that God is willing to hedge in my children and keep them from the paths that are not the right ones. To keep their hearts tender and gentle to Jesus in their lives. I also have a responsibility to teach my children to love the church and to be respectful of the leaders. I have to be careful not to be critical of others but to hold them up so that my children can witness the positive life of being part of a ministry family and—most important—a child of God. J

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The Shoelace Story

IF YOU ARE WONDERING why these two similar pictures of my shoes are here, let me assure you, it's not a mistake. They're here for you to play "spot the difference."

While you're trying to discover the difference between these two pictures, let me tell you something about the shoes. I bought them not long ago, and I really liked them. I liked them so much that I paid full price for them, when I usually buy only things on sale.

These shoes are very comfortable, yet trendy. I began wearing them every day to work. I soon realized, however, that something was wrong.

Did you notice that the shoelaces have little metal bits at the end, which add to their attractiveness? Well, as I walk, the little metal bits flip around and get wedged inside the shoe. They're a painful nuisance! I have to stop walking and take the bits out.

Since my job requires quite a lot of sitting, this is not a major problem. I like the shoes, so for a few months I just dealt with the annoyance. I then had an idea. *Maybe I should try tying the shoelaces differently.* So I tied them by making the bows bigger, which made the loose ends with the metal bits shorter. This was different from the way I have always tied my shoes, but *ta-da!* It worked! I now enjoy my shoes without metal bits getting stuck between my foot and shoe. Did you notice the difference with the laces in the pictures? It's difficult to spot because it's very small, but it resulted in a big change for me!

Why did I wait three months to try this? It simply didn't occur to me at first. I thought the problem was a manufacturing fault and just accepted it.

I bore the pain and nuisance of the shoes for three months because I didn't consider changing the way I had done something all my life. This experience, however, has me asking the question, "What other ways of doing things or thought patterns or relationships am I stuck in that make my life painful and don't allow me to enjoy life to the fullest?"

I've learned the importance of asking more questions. Jesus is a great example of asking questions. About 300 questions that Jesus asked are recorded in the Bible.*

So, how about you? Perhaps you, too, should ask more questions. These questions could include:

- Why am I doing this?
- Can this be done another way?
- Can I do something differently to improve my relationship with another person? If not, why not?

The pictures of my shoes are a great reminder to try something different. May they open the door to changes or improvements in your life. 7

* Martin B. Copenhaver, *Jesus Is the Question: The 307 Questions Jesus Asked and the 3 He Answered* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014).

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Secret of STRENGTH

AN INTENSITY SUCH AS never before was seen is taking possession of the world. In amusement, in moneymaking, in the contest for power, in the very struggle for existence, there is a terrible force that engrosses body and mind and soul. In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10.

Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ's loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work.

These workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength. They must give themselves time to think, to pray, to wait upon God for a renewal of

physical, mental, and spiritual power. They need the uplifting influence of His Spirit. Receiving this, they will be quickened by fresh life. The wearied frame and tired brain will be refreshed, the burdened heart will be lightened.

Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him—this is our need. Happy will it be for the children of our homes and the students of our schools when parents and teachers shall learn in their own lives the precious experience pictured in these words from the Song of Songs:

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my Beloved among the sons.
I sat down under His shadow with great delight,
And His fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banqueting house,
And His banner over me was love."
Song of Solomon 2:3, 4.



Taken from Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 260, 261.



WORSHIPING TOGETHER: EVERY-WEEK EVANGELISM

WHETHER WE HAVE CHILDREN, grandchildren, or no children, it's important to create a church where children feel welcomed and included in the worship service. If we want children to join our church when they are older, we need to make sure they're happy in church today. Each time a child experiences a church service they will either enjoy it and feel increasingly positive toward church, or they will not enjoy it and will feel increasingly negative toward church.

Throughout the Bible, worship included people of all ages. It took place in a garden, in a tent, by an altar, on the side of a mountain, in the temple, in synagogues, and in homes. God also gave His people a calendar of amazing feasts and celebrations that included all the senses (such as in the tabernacle) and different hands-on activities, such as building temporary tabernacles together. No one in the Bible ever worshiped the way most Christians have worshiped for the last few centuries.

INVOLVEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Whenever a younger person is involved in the worship service, the other children and teens are more likely to pay attention. Churches that are intentional about creatively involving children are more likely to attract more children and families. When a child is involved in the service, unchurched relatives might be more willing to come along too.

Here are some simple ideas for involving young people in your church services:

YOU'RE WELCOME!

- Train your children and young people as volunteer greeters. Let them take turns welcoming other young people who visit your church.
- Help children assemble welcome packs for visitors, especially children. Ask them what they would like to receive in a welcome pack if they visited a church.

LET'S PRAY

- Invite a family to offer prayer as a group. They can each offer part of the prayer, such as adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and requests.

- Invite children to bring something that they're thankful for and place it on a table at the front of the church as part of your prayer of thanksgiving.
- Give children cards on which they can write short prayers. Gather them up during the offering time and choose a few to read each week during the prayer.

READING GOD'S WORD

- Invite a child or teen to present the Bible reading during the service. Ask them a month in advance so they can study the passage with a parent or a safe mentor and then deliver it with meaning and understanding. Give them the space to be creative. They could act out the passage or they could draw pictures or take photos and create a PowerPoint to illustrate the verses. They might even dress as a Bible character to present the words.
- Invite a young person to read the scripture and then interview them about what the verses mean to them personally.
- Ask a family to present the scripture passage in whatever way they would like. Find a dramatized Bible version to inspire ideas.

THE JOY OF GIVING

- Invite young people to design tithe and offering envelopes for your church.
- Ask them to create or decorate different containers for special offerings and events.

VISUAL DISPLAY

- Invite children and teens to create artwork for your church services. In one church an artist worked with the children to make beautiful wall hangings illustrated with Bible verses.
- Ask children to bring to church one flower in a specific color, such as red for a Communion service. A skilled florist can help them create a display for your church. Even a row of red flowers cut to the same height and placed in small bottles or drinking glasses can look amazing. Or they can make informal arrangements in jars for the tables at a potluck.
- Invite artistic children and teens to design church bulletin covers or PowerPoint backgrounds.

SING YOUR HEART OUT!


- Plan to include a contemporary children's song in your service; it can follow the children's story.
- Invite a young person to choose a hymn or song on the theme of the service. Let them introduce the hymn and explain why they chose it. Shy children can write out their ideas for someone else to read or make a video of their introduction to show before the song.

- Encourage young musicians. Invite a music teacher to mentor them and help them prepare a simple accompaniment that is well within their ability. Or let them play with a small group, where mistakes might be less obvious.

SERMON TIME

- It's important to help children to enjoy the sermon time in whatever way is comfortable and enjoyable for them. Most sermons last much longer than a child can endure sitting still in an adult-sized chair!
- Tell the children's story in the middle of the sermon, as a sermon illustration.
- Find practical sermon illustrations, such as simple science experiments, and involve children in the process.
- Invite teens to make a short video on the sermon theme or to interview other church members about a sermon-related topic.
- Hide an image related to the sermon on some of the PowerPoint slides. Ask children to count how many of these images—such as animals, words, people, or objects—are hiding on the slides.
- Make a collection of story bags for younger children to borrow during church. A story bag has felt shapes for creating a scene on the floor, soft items that can be used to tell a story, such as plush or knitted animals, knitted Bible characters, and other quiet components related to a story. The bags also contain a simple storybook so that a child can use the pictures to tell their own Bible story and act it out with the soft props.

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Ideally, worship services include a variety of activities to suit everyone in the congregation. Why not explore intergenerational worship? Search the Internet for books and resources to help you grow intergenerational worship in your church. 

Karen Holford is the Family Ministries director for the Trans-European Division, and she is passionate about the every-week evangelistic opportunities of intergenerational worship services. She is the author of the book Altogether Wonderful available from AdventSource.

WHEN SHOULD I SEE MY DOCTOR?

Hemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout the body. A seriously low hemoglobin level can cause general tiredness, weakness, pale skin, shortness of breath, and dizziness. Left untreated it can damage internal organs, especially the heart, which is required to work harder.

IT WAS JUST A MINOR ANNOYANCE, and actually she couldn't remember when it started happening.

Their split-level house had several partial flights of stairs, and often when Edith* climbed one of them, she would find herself somewhat short of breath. It was nothing serious, just a feeling that lasted a few minutes without interfering with the rest of her activities. She attributed it to being out of shape. Yes, she did feel tired most of the time, but, after all, she was a busy mom taking care of her home, children, and job.

Only when she went to her doctor's office for her regular annual check-up did she find out something startling. Following the physical exam, she visited the lab for routine blood tests. That afternoon the doctor's office called and told her to report immediately to the emergency department of the local hospital because her hemoglobin blood count was dangerously low. Edith followed instructions and received as treatment three units of blood.

WHAT SYMPTOMS SHOULD I TAKE SERIOUSLY?

A nagging pain, a persistent sore throat, shortness of breath—should you see your doctor?

We often hesitate to run to the doctor's office over a seemingly mild health concern, especially if we think the cause is a neglected lifestyle habit or "something going around." Or we may temporarily relieve the symptoms with home remedies and self-treatment. It's often just easier to "wait it out," hoping the body will correct the problem on its own.

The fact is that for many conditions, early detection and appropriate medical intervention can lead to far better outcomes, as evidenced by Edith's story.

It's vital to recognize when a situation or a symptom is an outright emergency, such as:

- difficulty breathing,
- chest pain,
- significant bleeding,
- sudden weakness,
- a traumatic head injury, or
- a loss of consciousness.

In these and any other potentially life-threatening scenarios, immediately call for emergency services assistance or go directly to a hospital emergency department.

The following is a list of less-than-obvious symptoms that should indicate it's a good idea to see your doctor. However, this is by no means a comprehensive list.

Remember, it's also important to "go with your instinct." *If you feel something is just not right, get it investigated.*

YOU SHOULD CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF:

1. You're losing weight without joining Weight Watchers.

As a general guideline, if you've lost more than 10 percent of your body weight within the past six months without any extra effort on your part, this is a red-flag warning, and it's time to see your doctor.

2. Your cold symptoms are getting worse instead of better.

A severe cough that lasts longer than two weeks, chest pain and shortness of breath, fever with muscle aches, difficulty swallowing, tiredness, nausea and vomiting—all are indications that medical help is advised. The elderly, expecting mothers, and individuals with debilitating preexisting health conditions are especially susceptible to complications from colds or the flu.



3. Your fever keeps coming back.

One way your body fights infection is with fever. However, a fever that lasts longer than three days or is persistently high (above 103° Fahrenheit or 39.4° Celsius) can be a sign of a more serious infection.

4. Your throat hurts when you swallow.

A typical sore throat can make swallowing uncomfortable. This usually improves in 2-3 days. However, severe pain when swallowing can indicate infection or injury and warrants medical evaluation.

5. You feel lightheaded.

Periodic lightheadedness when getting out of bed quickly or standing up from a prolonged seated position is considered a mild condition. But if you feel lightheaded for more than a minute every time you stand up, causing you to sit or lie back down, or if you find yourself becoming lightheaded while exercising, it's important to find out the cause.

6. You are often short of breath.

If you find you are having unusual spells of breathlessness and you are not spending time on mountain tops (high elevations) or engaged in strenuous exercise, are not significantly overweight, or not in an area of extreme temperature, then make an appointment to have a good medical check-up. Remember Edith's story.

*“Your ears will hear a voice behind you saying,
‘This is the way: walk in it.’”*

Isaiah 30:21, NIV

7. Your bowel or bladder function has changed.

Normal bowel movement and urination patterns vary from person to person. Periodic minor deviation from routine can occur depending on food eaten, stress level, illness, and some medications. However, a sudden change in pattern, such as pain, black or bloody stools, severe diarrhea or constipation, frequent urination or inability to urinate, or change in color of the urine should all be alerts that medical evaluation is crucial.

8. You are seeing bright flashes.

For those who suffer periodically with migraine headaches, bright flashes of light or spots appearing in their vision are not unusual. However, if you do not have a history of migraines and suddenly bright flashes interrupt your vision, you could be experiencing a retinal detachment. To prevent permanent vision loss, you need immediate medical attention.

9. You experience confusion, disorientation, or mood changes.

Infection, drug interactions, injury to the head, stroke, or mental health issues are just a few conditions that can lead to confusion, disorientation, or mood changes. A health assessment is of utmost importance in determining the cause and initiating appropriate treatment.

10. You are experiencing unusual bleeding.


For women vaginal spotting or bleeding beyond one year into menopause is not normal and should be evaluated by a physician in order to rule out possible serious causes, such as cancer.

A wound that does not stop bleeding, a prolonged heavy nose bleed, or frequent nosebleeds could indicate a blood-clotting problem, a low red-blood-cell count, or the side effect of specific medications, etc. The problem needs medical evaluation.

Some health concerns, such as the development of elevated blood pressure, can progress silently without a person's awareness. Getting an annual physical examination is an excellent way to identify potential problems early, and take lifestyle and even medical measures to keep ahead of a more serious outcome. In Edith's case, it was during her annual physical check-up that a serious problem was discovered. With emergency treatment and appropriate follow-up aid, potential disaster was averted.

CONCLUSION

Our bodies communicate to us in silent voices, such as aches, pains, fatigue, feelings, and emotions. Some of these voices are louder than others, demanding immediate attention and help. But it's those whisper-like alerts, warning us gently that something is going wrong, that also deserve attention and can help us avoid a potential crisis.

We have been created by a loving, caring God who not only gave us life but also installed within us an amazing security system of alerts and warnings. 

*Name Changed.

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.



Time for Church!

SABBATH MORNING SERVICES can seem really long when you're a child. Sometimes I help grownups understand what it's like for children in church. I make them sit on a table in front of a plain wall, because that's like sitting on a chair that's too big for you while not being able to see anything interesting. Next, I play them a sermon in a language that they don't understand. I do it for only a minute, but I ask them to imagine what it would be like to listen to that for an hour and not be able to understand anything. Then I ask them how they would feel if they had to do that every week for 10 years! They usually laugh about it, but it helps them to understand how children might feel during some church services.

It's much better to spend your time in church in a way that brings you closer to God. Ask your parents to buy you a good children's Bible that's easy for you to read and understand. Some have pictures to color or lots of ideas for things to do (for example, the *Hands-On Bible*). Ask your parents if you can have a Sabbath bag with a good notebook, pencil, markers, and other things that help you to enjoy church. Maybe your parents could pop a surprise into your bag once in a while! Here are some ways you can worship quietly in church during a hard-to-understand sermon.

MAKE A REBUS PUZZLE BIBLE VERSE

Choose your favorite verse from the Scripture reading and turn it into a rebus puzzle. This will also help you to memorize the words. A rebus puzzle is one where you swap some of the words, or parts of words, for little pictures of the objects, or pictures of things that sound similar. You might draw a heart for the word "love," write the number 4 instead of the word "for," draw a stick person for "man" or "woman," or write g8 for "gate." Here's a sample:



Show the rebus puzzle to someone and see if they can figure out the verse!



ART JOURNAL

Choose your favorite verse from the Scripture reading or sermon and turn it into a picture or postcard. Write the verse lightly in pencil so you can erase any mistakes. Then use your pens or crayons to bring it to life. Decorate the whole card in ways that illustrate the meaning of the verse, using your favorite style of artwork. On the back of the card write what the verse means to you or what you remember from the sermon. Write the date on the back of the card and keep your cards as a sermon journal.

PICTURE IT!

Sometimes the preacher will tell a story as a sermon illustration. Retell the story by drawing a simple cartoon. Show your cartoon to a friend and tell them the story too. What does this story tell you about God?

MODEL IT

If you have fidgety hands (and if it's OK with your parents) take something into church that you can use to create a scene from a Bible story or the sermon. You can use paper, scissors, glue, and coloring things; or colored modeling clay on a small tray or in a plastic box; or chenille wires/pipe cleaners. Afterward, show your scene to someone and tell all about it.



PRAY



Look around your church and pray for 10 people you see. You might not know what they need, but you can pray that they will know how much God loves them or that God will bless them today. Choose one person you are praying for and share God's love with them after the church service. Maybe you could make them a Bible verse card, or give them a hug if you're comfortable, or smile at them and wish them Happy Sabbath!



GET TO KNOW BIBLE CHARACTERS

If the sermon is difficult for you to understand, choose one of your favorite Bible characters and read about them in the Bible. If you are not sure where to find their story, ask your mom or dad to help you. Then draw a picture of a scene from their life, write a letter to the person, or design a trophy to celebrate one of their character strengths, such as bravery or faith or leadership. Write their story in your own words, create a poem about them, or even make up a song about their life. Find out some unusual facts about their life and make a quiz for your family. What do you like best about this character? What is the most important lesson you learned from their life story? In what ways are you like this character, and in what ways are you very different? How could you grow your character to be more like theirs?



GET INVOLVED

What would you like to see in your church service? What do you think would make it better for the children? Which part of the church service would you like to change the most? Which part would you like to take part in? What gifts has God given you that could be used in your church? Draw a big outline of a church on a piece of paper and write your dreams and hopes for your church inside the outline. Show it to your mom or dad and ask if you and the other children can help make your church the best place for children to experience God. Ask your parents to read my other article in this magazine (page 18) so they can find ways to involve children in your church service every week.





MAKE A WORD-SEARCH PUZZLE

Make a grid of squares on a sheet of paper using a ruler and pencil, or print out grid paper on your computer. When the preacher uses a key word in the sermon, fit it into the grid to make a word-search puzzle. Or use some of the words in the Bible reading for the day. You can write the words forward, backward, upward, downward, and diagonally, as long as all the letters in a word are in a straight line. Put one letter of the word in each square of the grid. It's even more fun if you can use a letter from one word in another word, so that the words crisscross through the grid. Whenever you include a word in your puzzle, write it down on a list, so that your parents, siblings, or friends can look for all your hidden words. You won't be able to fill all the squares in the grid with words, so fill the extra empty squares with any letter you like, or the letters of a Bible verse or name, until the square or rectangular grid has a letter in every small square. Keep an eraser handy for mistakes! ■

S	M	I	C	O	M	P	A	S	S	I	O	N	A	T	E	L
U	L	A	U	M	O	P	R	O	T	X	F	G	A	E	H	Y
H	U	D	X	D	D	X	M	N	Z	O	S	J	O	N	S	H
U	F	H	Z	G	M	V	E	I	A	H	J	S	K	C	X	U
N	E	I	W	H	K	I	M	L	U	E	F	U	X	O	I	R
S	C	F	M	I	T	F	C	M	X	U	S	O	Z	U	X	O
E	A	M	N	A	G	Z	B	E	D	R	B	R	Y	R	R	F
L	E	D	P	I	F	L	E	F	V	A	R	E	D	A	G	O
F	P	N	J	Q	E	E	C	D	O	T	O	N	W	G	Z	R
I	F	W	C	M	M	N	E	H	C	Z	W	E	J	I	H	G
S	V	P	X	I	R	E	G	D	E	K	G	G	Q	N	P	I
H	F	U	X	K	Z	J	X	Z	R	E	Y	N	B	G	C	V
T	Q	R	G	N	I	K	R	O	W	D	R	A	H	V	Q	I
O	X	E	A	Z	P	E	N	M	R	S	G	F	M	A	U	N
V	C	O	N	S	I	D	E	R	A	T	E	Z	U	M	T	G
Q	K	W	F	M	T	S	E	N	O	H	M	G	A	L	S	A
S	D	P	F	U	G	J	A	Q	W	N	E	I	U	M	I	Z

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



Dear Deborah,

Recently, a church member shared a heartbreaking story. It concerned us greatly, and we want to do the right thing for both parties involved.

The church member explained to us that she and her four young children had just settled into the church pew one Sabbath while the announcements were being shared from the pulpit. She had given one of her boys some coloring pages and crayons, while another son was turning pages in his nature book. A few seconds later, an older woman sitting in the pew in front of the young mother looked backed at her and gave the young mom “the glare.” The older woman then proceeded to tell her that her kids were being very noisy and offered to “teach” the younger mom some parenting skills that would help her with children.

Understandably, this young mom was upset and annoyed. We have several concerns, but what is most disturbing is that the young mother is understandably reluctant to return to church.

My husband and I want our church to be a safe, nurturing environment where families thrive and grow closer to Jesus. We are thankful we were informed about this incident, but it’s troubling to think about other incidents that we may never know about.

*Sincerely,
Wanting the Best*

Dear Wanting the Best,

It would be wonderful if situations like the one you described could be avoided altogether. Unfortunately, incidents like this are way too common—and often unavoidable. Thankfully, with prayer and wisdom found in God’s Word, there are hopeful options for both parties involved.

First, affirmation to the young mom is essential! Praise and encouragement will go a long way. Thank her for being faithful and committed to “training up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV).

Getting our families into the car on Sabbath can be challenging enough, even without the burden of meeting others’ expectations as well. Some of us have “been there,” and if not, we at least have observed other families juggling little ones amid whimpers, giggles, and frustrations. Moms and dads are to be commended for bringing their children to Sabbath School and church in spite of the challenges. I remember those struggles as a young mother, and some days were just hard. Often, I felt like all eyes were on me, and I couldn’t get to the back door fast enough!

Consider kindly offering help to the young mom, if needed. Also, praying with her and for the older woman would be beneficial. We never know what people are going through, and maybe the woman

was just having a rough day. Suggest that the young family sit in a different section at church, if she feels that is necessary. Also, providing opportunities to attend a social event outside of church can help families come to know each other better and understand individual circumstances.

As for the comments from the older woman, a visit to her from the pastor and an elder or another church leader would be appropriate. Naturally, we avoid conversations that bring critical comments to light, but creating a healthy, safe environment is a win-win for everyone. Kindly evaluating the scenario with her can foster spiritual growth. With thoughtful encouragement, she will realize that we all are a work in process, and we all have room to grow.

It’s not our job to change others, but it is our responsibility to love them, with Jesus’ help. God alone is responsible for change, and as we pray, miracles will spring forth. God will bless you and your husband as you seek to cultivate a healthy church environment for families.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NKJV).

Desiring God’s Best,
Deborah

Northern Asia-Pacific Division

The Amagi Retreat Center near Mt. Fuji, Japan, provided a peaceful fall setting for a prayer retreat sponsored by the Ministerial Spouses Association (MSA) of the East Japan Conference in late 2018. Janet Page from the General Conference spoke to 26 attendees from throughout the conference. Also participating were Akemi Duarte, Japan Union Conference Women's/Family Ministries director, and Lisa Clouzet, Northern Asia-Pacific Division MSA coordinator.

Sachiko Obara and her husband, Pastor Nozomu Obara, East Japan Conference president, had been praying about how to encourage the ministerial spouses in their conference. After continued prayer and planning, this retreat became a reality.

Each attendee was greeted with a devotional bag containing such items as a special book and journal to use throughout the weekend. The retreat schedule allowed time for personal prayer, small-group prayers, meals, and fellowship. Saturday night included group activities to help the spouses learn from each other and get better acquainted.

Some comments from participants: "I would like to have a special time daily to praise God." "The retreat was so nice!"

"Thank you so much for Mrs. Janet Page." "There has never been a time like this retreat." "It was an awesome and real Sabbath, and I felt healing." "I experienced God and got an insight that continuing prayer is very significant." "I now recognize why God allows challenges in my church!" "It empowered me for the next 12 months!"



Ministerial spouses from Eastern Japan pray together.

South Pacific Division

600 ADVENTIST WOMEN HALT TRAFFIC IN TONGA

Traffic in the main street of Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital, came to a halt the morning of April 18 as a parade involving 600 Seventh-day Adventist women from around the Pacific made its way to the Royal Palace.

Led by the Tongan Police Band, the parade was the focal point of the 2019 Trans-Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) Women's Congress, which opened April 17. Wearing colorful traditional dress and waving the flags of their nations, the women carried banners and posters promoting EndIt-Now, a global Seventh-day Adventist campaign aimed at stopping violence against women. Many curious onlookers stopped to watch the procession.



A police band leads the parade through the main street of Nuku'alofa in Tonga.

In a special honor, Queen Nanasipau'u permitted the parade to enter the palace grounds through the front gate, an entry point that is normally reserved for royalty. In another gracious gesture, the queen arranged for congress guest speakers Janet Page (associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association), Dr. Danijela Schubert (South Pacific Division Women's Ministries leader), Ann Wooldridge (Adsafe general manager), and Dr. Wendy Jackson (Avondale lecturer) to sit beside her on the palace front veranda overlooking the lawn where congress attendees gathered. A special gift-giving ceremony saw representatives from each of the countries in the TPUM present a gift from their homeland to the queen.



The queen of Tonga (second from right) sits with women's congress speakers (from left) Ann Wooldridge, Dr. Danijela Schubert, Janet Page, and Dr. Wendy Jackson.

Queen Nanasipau'u was also a special guest at the opening ceremony, where she gave an inspiring speech based on the congress theme "Women Transformed in Jesus."

"I'd like to begin by thanking God for bringing together so many beautiful, amazing, and inspiring women from around the Pacific to celebrate women transformed," the queen said. "Transformation begins with Jesus. Through His death on the cross and His mercy we are forgiven. Through the gift of His Holy Spirit we are transformed. It is Jesus who inspires us; it is Jesus who enables us. When we run out of our own meager resources and come to the end of our strength and our wisdom, there is only one Person who can carry us through. His name is Jesus."



Participants march onto the palace grounds.

"During the last few years there is an English catchphrase that has become popular. It is 'I got this,'" continued the queen, who is a Methodist. "Today I want to remind you that God has got this. He says to us, 'Give me your need; leave it with Me; I can handle it; trust Me; I've got this.'"

"Why have we gathered here at this congress? We have gathered here because God's got this. Because of who He is, He can use women who are transformed in Jesus to heal your family, to heal your city, and even to heal your nation. . . . He wants the women He has transformed in Jesus to stand up and do their part in whatever nation and in whatever area of influence that He has given you."

Congress organizers said it was a blessing that it didn't rain as forecasters had predicted so the parade could take place under sunny skies.



Representatives from Fiji wave their flags.

"So far the congress is going really, really well," TPUM president Pastor Mavani Kaufononga said as the congress progressed. "I feel that the Lord is leading, and the evidence is that the Easter weekend is in a rainy season for Tonga. . . . It is a miracle that we have beautiful weather today."

Pastor Kaufononga said the parade and the congress are providing amazing opportunities to raise awareness about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with local media providing coverage of the activities.

"It is really good—all the newspapers are running stories on this, and just the fact that the Seventh-day Adventists are empowering women to lead out in our work—it gives a very strong message," he said.



Marchers proudly wave the Vanuatu flag as children watch.

The congress is the official launch of the TPUM's Year of the Woman, which is about empowering women to be leaders and evangelists.

"This is a historical event for our church. . . . This is the first time that the TPUM has dedicated a year for women to lead out," Pastor Kaufononga said. "I believe in the power of women and what they can do."



Meresiana Matavesi (left) is a pastor's wife in Vanualevu, Fiji. Luisa Murphy is a church member in the Bua District, where she serves in children's ministry and women's ministry at her local church.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

For a number of women, getting to the congress involved personal sacrifices and being extra resourceful. For Fijian attendee Meresiana Matavesi, it was a case of using a coconut tree to raise funds. From the tree she produced two types of coconut oil, along with coconut broomsticks. She sold the products in her own village and in neighboring villages.

Mrs Matavesi also took her project to God, with assistance from her 4-year-old daughter, who became her prayer partner. "Every time we had a family devotion, she would pray about it [the congress]. Even meal times—sometimes she didn't pray for the food. [Instead] she prayed, 'God, my mother wants to go to Tonga.' . . . I believe in my heart that God multiplied [my money]. I am so excited to be here. Nothing is impossible with God."

The congress provided a diverse program including morning prayer walks, worship services, and discipleship and health workshops.



Conference participants are united in diversity.

Southern Asia Division

Shepherdesses from South-Central India met in Bangalore in July 2018. Celebrating the theme "Arise and Shine," they heard from several speakers, including retired Shepherdess coordinator Hepzibah Kore.



Shepherdesses from Northern India met in Kolkata, also in July 2018. Their theme was evangelism, and 20 baptisms resulted from the program.



In August 2018, Shepherdesses met in Bidar, where they learned principles for serving as a pastor's wife. The wives were encouraged to recommit to joining their husbands in ministry.



In Southeast India a Shepherdess workshop was held in September 2018. The women learned how to give Bible studies to individuals and groups. They also learned about personal preparation and the do's and don'ts of preparing and participating in the Communion service.



Northern India Union held a Shepherdess advisory in September 2018. The theme was “Mission of Hope,” with topics including “The Christian Home,” “Importance of the Communion Service,” and “Women’s Health.” The pastors’ wives reaffirmed their support of their husbands in ministry and learned to prepare themselves to serve as well.



Also in September 2018, the pastors’ wives in the Kolar-Chinthamani Region met at the regional office. They confessed to their negligence in God’s work because no guidance had been provided to them. They promised their co-operation in ministry.



In October 2018, Northern India pastors’ wives met in Delhi for meetings. Pastors’ wives reaffirmed their role in service to family, church, and society.



Pastors’ wives from Northern India also met for the first time in Manipur. Their theme was “Faith in Action.”

Western India pastors’ wives met in Pune in October 2018. The West Telangana Section conducted revival meetings for pastors and spouses in March 2019 at Machireddypally.



The featured speaker was Pastor M. Wilson, executive secretary of the Southern Asia Division. He presented heart-touching messages to approximately 700 adults and 100 children.

Topics included “God of the Holy Bible,” “Your Sin and God’s Solution,” and “Human Destiny and the End of the World.” In addition, he told Bible stories and taught action songs to the kids during the daily Children’s Hour.

Every day the meetings began with a health session based on the lifestyle program NEWSTART.

Pastor T. Charles, president of West Telangana Section, conducted the consecration service and dedicated all the participants to work diligently for God’s cause and to hasten the Lord’s return.

Division Shepherdess director, Mrs. Sophia Wilson, addressed the spouses on topics including “The Role of a Pastor’s Wife in God’s Ministry,” “Instructions on How to Support a Pastoral Husband in Ministry,” and “How to Be a Godly Role Model.”



Pastors and Shepherdesses attend meetings in Machireddypally.

10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

SEEKING GOD'S SPIRIT

January 8-18, 2020

“After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.”

ACTS 4:31, NLT

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