



THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

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PEACE IN THE STORM



ON THE COVER

Storms punctuate life on this earth. Sometimes they are unexpected and devastating, like the coronavirus. Sometimes they are familiar and unrelenting, like anxiety. They cripple our world, our community, our church, our family, our own emotional well-being. Jesus showed us how He handled a storm—He not only stopped it, but He brought peace to those affected by it. May this issue's articles help you navigate life's storms.



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LEARNING TO TRUST *God*

MOST OF MY LIFE I have felt I wasn't good enough. When I became a leader of retreats or spoke in public, I was consumed with fretting and worry. But one day at a prayer conference, God literally moved my thumb and started changing my heart.

The story actually starts when I was coordinating a women's retreat of almost 500 women, with 75 more on the waiting list. The room's capacity was 450. The logistics of accommodating and feeding more women was daunting, even if a larger meeting room became available.

Just three days before the retreat, I picked up the main speaker, who was a good friend. Tami had never been to California, and I wanted to do something special for her. So I took her to San Francisco to ride the trolley cars and feed the sea lions at the wharf. Then we traveled down the beautiful coastline to Monterey. All the time, I continued to fret and worry.

Finally Tami said to me, "You are the one who taught me to have faith and believe in God. You need to trust God!"

I gave her a guilty look. She was right. I wasn't trusting God.

The weekend went great, and God blessed. But by Sunday morning, I was sick with a virus. I hurt all over! I still felt like I should take Tami to the airport, and all the way she reminded me, "You need to trust God." As she headed to the plane, she turned around and said one more time, "Janet, you need to trust God!"

I was ready to strangle her, yet God was speaking through her.

Still, with each new event I planned or had to speak for, I fretted over every detail. I was making myself emotionally (and physically) sick.



*"May the God of hope
fill you with all joy
and peace as you
trust in him, so that
you may overflow with
hope by the power of
the Holy Spirit."*

Romans 15:13, NIV

Don't miss the inspiring story on page 6. I had the privilege of meeting this mother and her daughter and hearing how spending time in God's Word brought this young girl emotional healing.

GOD INTERVENES

A few months later I was coordinating a prayer conference for adults with teenagers as leaders. They came with their youth pastor to teach us how to study a Bible passage in a small group setting and how to pray together. As usual, I stressed over the details.

Near the last day, I was sitting in a small group. We were studying Luke 24:13–35—the road to Emmaus. Our teenage leader had us read through it individually and then discuss the who, what, when, and where. Next she instructed us to privately read it again and ask God what He had for us personally.

I prayed for God to show me, and as I was reading, I felt my heart tighten at verse 25. “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!’”

I felt God was saying to me, “Why don’t you trust Me?”

Laying the Bible down with my hand resting on that verse, I bowed my head and prayed.

When I opened my eyes, I was shocked! My Bible was no longer open to Luke 24:25. It was open to Romans 15, and my thumb was on verse 13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (NIV).

God was strongly convicting me that fretting and worrying was a sin. Right there, I confessed my sin and accepted God’s forgiveness. I wanted to fully trust Him all the time.

THE JOURNEY

During the next months, my trust in God grew. I praised Him for His intentional leading and faithful guidance in changing me.

A few months later, I was asked to speak at a Sunday Women’s Day brunch. Again, I began fretting, worrying, and feeling terribly inadequate. At the end of the brunch, I was handed a gift, and tied on the bow was a Bible verse—Romans 15:13.

A short while later Jerry and I were asked to speak at a prayer conference where we used to work and where Tami lived. I began fretting over speaking where we had worked for seven years. I thought, *No one wants to hear me.*

On the opening night Tami sat in the pew in front of me and handed me a small card with a pretty picture and Romans 15:13 on it. Her note on the back of the card said that she was praying for me.

I was stunned! Later, I asked how she happened to give me that verse. She said, “I don’t know what the Bible verse was. I just had the card and used it to write you a short note.”

God is amazingly personal. He really cares about every detail of our lives. He longs for us to rest in Him and trust Him.

As this world comes closer to the end, chaos and uncertainty are the new normal. Jesus encountered difficult times too. It was His connection with His heavenly Father that brought peace.

Over and over, I have learned that He is faithful and sure. When we pray and read His Word, healing and peace can happen. But I have to admit that I am a slow learner. So in the next issue I will share more of the story.

For now, I’ll leave you with what Tami told me: “Trust God!” 

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



THE POWER OF Prayer

IT SHOULD BE THE FIRST—NOT LAST—THING WE DO.

PRAYER IS POWERFUL. I'm sure if you asked most people, they would agree with this statement. But how many truly understand the power of prayer and take time daily to plead with God? How many truly claim His promises and persevere in prayer?

My friend and prayer partner, Kathryn Styer, a member of the Martinsburg, West Virginia, church, shared the following testimony:

It's easy to take on the burden to convert our loved ones, to think, *If only I say and do just the right things, they'll get it.* I spent many years in this state of mind. Then I started to pray. I put all my hopes and dreams for my husband into prayer and solicited the prayer of others.

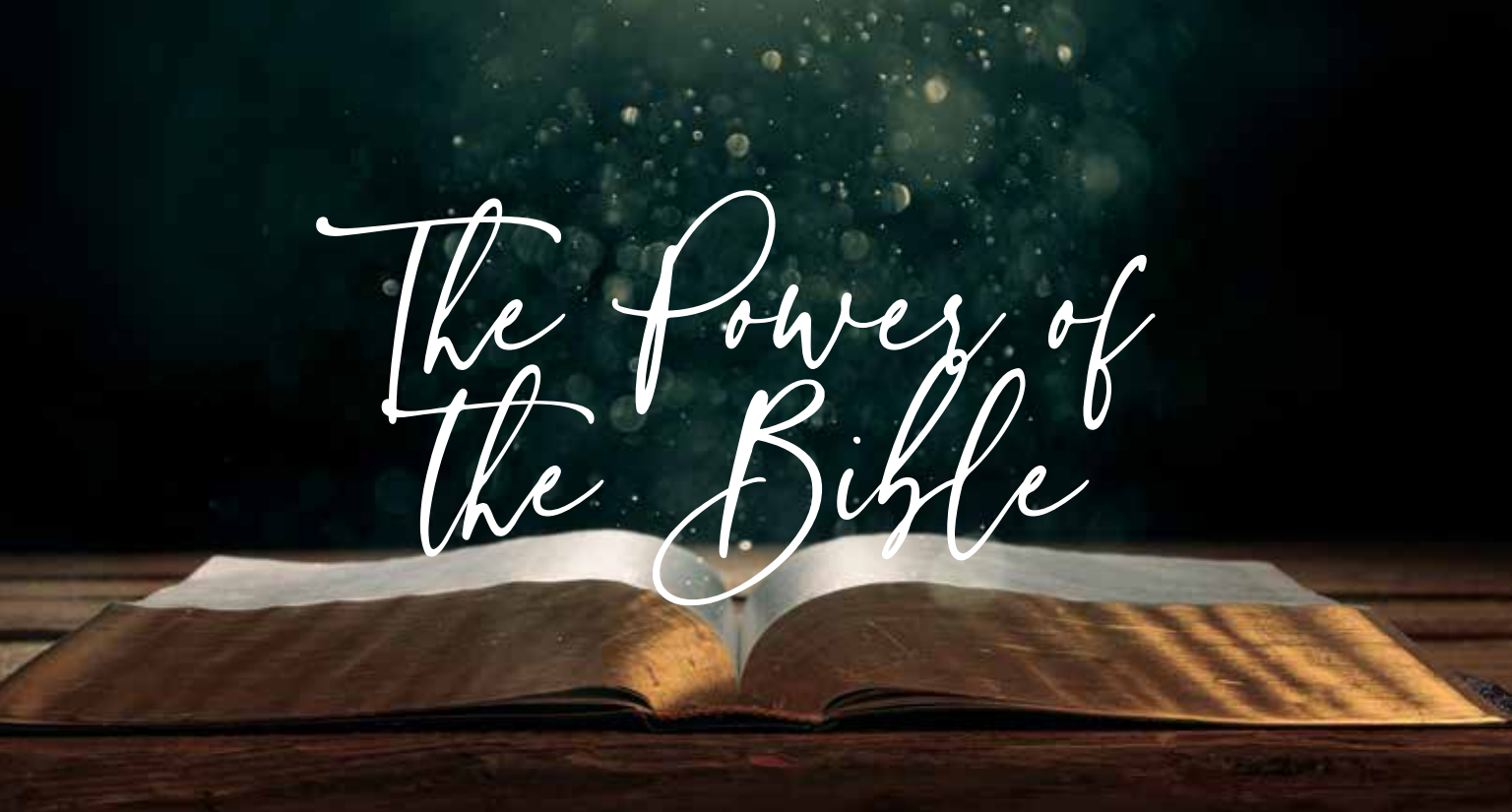
For years God simply asked me to love my husband unconditionally and move forward with God in my own life—that I could do. When the change started to happen in his life, I can only describe it as a miracle. A strong longing grew in his heart to know truth, and that search led him to God. The Holy Spirit spoke straight

to his mind. I knew without a doubt that the changes I saw were not my work in the least, but the work of God Himself. My husband has a Savior, and it's not me.

Today we attend church together with our girls and have a heart to serve together as a family. Prayer works because it opens the avenue for the Holy Spirit to do the work.

When we feel helpless, we can know that our greatest work is prayer. Hearts are not changed by our words; they are changed by the Holy Spirit. Let's continue to persevere and make prayer the most important thing we do! 

Jessica Manatan is a follower of Jesus and active within the Mountain View Conference in West Virginia, serving as assistant prayer coordinator and a member of the Executive Committee and youth committee. She is passionate about prayer and connecting with youth/young adults. She is a mother, sister, friend, dog owner, strength trainer, lover of road trips, car karaoke singer, recovering people-pleaser, and current boundary setter. This article originally appeared in the Columbia Union Visitor. Reprinted with permission.



The Power of the Bible

COULD IT BRING HOPE AND HEALING TO A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER?

FYONA,* A VERY EDUCATED WOMAN, wanted to learn English. Living in the Middle East made that difficult. One day she came across the 3ABN television channel. She didn't know it was a Christian broadcast and had never heard of a Bible. Listening to the programs and reading passages on the screen accelerated her language learning. After more than a year, she was shocked to find out she had been reading from the Bible.

When she told her husband, he allowed her to keep watching the programs. He was sure Fyona's Muslim faith was grounded. However, the effect was the opposite. The more she watched, the more she became convicted that the Bible was the Word of God. She learned about Jesus, who wanted to be her Savior.

From the internet, she began downloading Bible chapters. She would read them aloud to her eight-year-old son and one-year-old daughter. When her husband found out, he became furious. He beat her and threatened to kill her if she did not give up the Christian religion.

She found an Adventist church, and members there gave her a small Bible. She hid it in the soap box in the bathroom, but her husband found it. He tore it up, and the beatings continued. When he left the house, he locked her inside.

One day Fyona was sick and begged her husband to take her to the hospital. He did and said he would pick her up later. While there she took a risk, found a public telephone, and called 3ABN, asking for prayer. They got everyone they could to pray for her.

Her husband could not bring himself to kill her, so he divorced her. The judge agreed to give Fyona custody of the children if she denounced her Christian religion. But she couldn't, so her husband was given the children. A faithful church member offered her lodging, and she stayed there for four months. Then she moved to her parents' house, but they would not allow her to keep any Christian books or even eat at their table.

Fyona's mother kept in contact with her son-in-law. She found out that the children were having trouble with the separation, especially her granddaughter, who was now seven. So she managed to bring Nijah to her house to visit Fyona.

When Nijah returned to her father's house, he harassed her and refused to let her phone her mother. She grew frightened and depressed. Her grades in school dropped, and she couldn't concentrate.

In the meantime, Fyona continued praying to get her children back. She especially prayed for Nijah.

Five years later, her son went to study at the university, leaving Nijah with her father and new stepmother. Fyona had moved to a remote village working as a Global Mission Pioneer.

CHANGES

One summer Nijah begged to spend the remainder of the holiday with her mother. She promised she would return home for school, but when the time came, she refused. Fyona was afraid she would be accused of kidnapping and go to jail. According to the law, children had to be 20 years old to choose which parent to live with. So Fyona went to a judge to appeal for custody. Her husband and mother came too.

Nijah became hysterical, so the judge conferred with a psychiatrist. They agreed that Nijah could stay with her mother temporarily, and a social worker would monitor her progress.

In her new environment and new school, Nijah did well and passed seventh grade.

That summer the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission organized a retreat for Global Mission Pioneers. Fyona hoped it would be an opportunity for her daughter to mingle with people of faith. The morning Bible studies included reading Bible verses, then copying and paraphrasing them.

Fyona was not comfortable writing, so the second day she asked Nijah if she would write for her. This would also give Nijah a chance to practice her handwriting. To Fyona's surprise, Nijah seemed to like the exercise. With meticulous writing, she also paraphrased the texts.

That was the beginning of Nijah's healing. When they returned home, Nijah continued to copy and paraphrase Bible verses. Fyona bought a beautiful notebook to encourage her to keep it up, and she eagerly did.

A Revival and Reformation Bible reading plan was beginning, and Fyona and Nijah decided to get involved. They began with the book of Joel. During the winter they read a chapter every night, and Nijah copied each chapter and paraphrased it in Arabic. When the Old Testament was finished, they started on the New Testament.

When Fyona moved to a different city for a new job, she enrolled Nijah in a school with high academic achievement, and she had a very successful eighth grade school year. Finally, the judge granted Fyona full custody!

When I met Fyona, she and Nijah were studying Mark. Nijah had a glow on her face and was full of joy. Every Sabbath she gathers the neighborhood children to tell them Bible stories. And since then, she has been baptized and is able to freely attend church. She can read the Bible in English and hopes that one day she will be qualified to teach children to succeed in their academic learning.

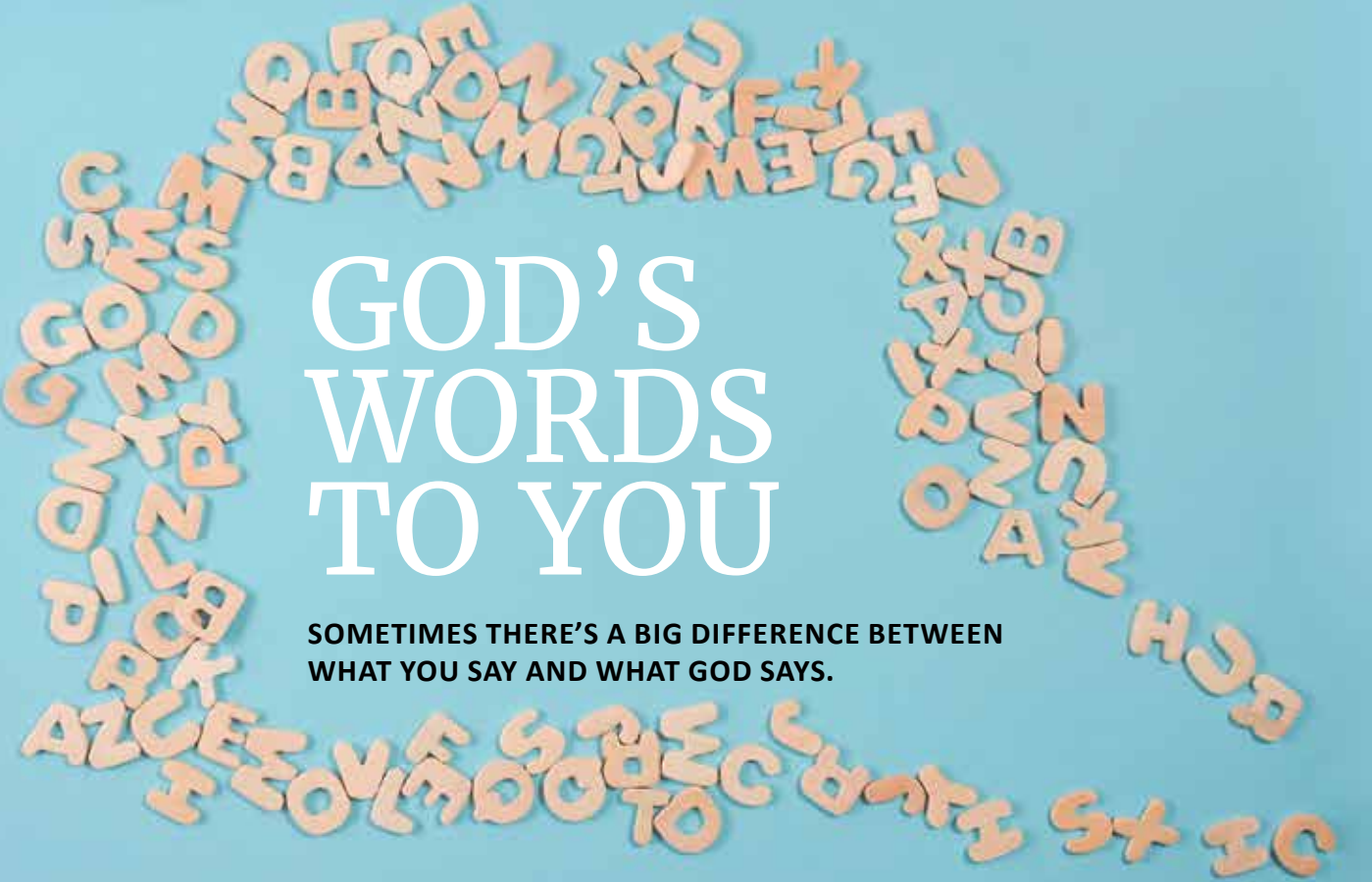
Wherever you are in the journey for emotional healing, whatever your sources of help, I have learned that one of the best additions is to read, meditate on, paraphrase, and personalize Scripture. Often, quiet times will calm the heart. God is always surrounding you with His love and His promises. 

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”

Isaiah 54:10, NIV

* All names have been changed.

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



GOD'S WORDS TO YOU

**SOMETIMES THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT GOD SAYS.**

You say: "It is impossible."

God says: "All things are possible."

Mark 10:27: "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God" (NASB).

You say: "I am too tired."

God says: "I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

You say: "Nobody really loves me."

God says: "I love you."

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:34: "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure."

You say: "I can't go on."

God says: "My grace is sufficient."

2 Corinthians 12:9: "He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Psalms 91:15: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him."

You say: "I cannot figure things out."

God says: "I will direct your steps."

Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Psalms 32:8: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.”

You say: “I can’t do it.”

God says: “You can do all things.”

Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

You say: “I am not able.”

God says: “I am able.”

2 Corinthians 9:8: “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

You say: “It’s not worth it.”

God says: “It will be worth it.”

Romans 8:28: “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

You say: “I can’t forgive myself.”

God says: “I forgive you.”

1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

You say: “I cannot manage.”

God says: “I will supply all your needs.”

Philippians 4:19: “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

You say: “I am afraid.”

God says: “I have not given you a spirit of fear.”

2 Timothy 1:7: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

You say: “I am always worried and frustrated.”

God says: “Cast all your cares on Me.”

1 Peter 5:7: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (NIV).

You say: “I’m not smart enough.”

God says: “I will give you wisdom.”

James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (NIV).

1 Corinthians 1:30: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

You say: “I feel all alone.”

God says: “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

John 14:18: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

Hebrews 13:5: “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”



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: [ministerspouses](#) [@ministryspouses](#)

ANXIETY GONE *Vinal*

HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR FAMILY, ESPECIALLY THE CHILDREN, HANDLE CRISES?

The coronavirus outbreak has triggered an enormous outpouring of anxiety. The escalating crisis is in the news every time we turn on the TV or tap on our phones. Life has suddenly turned upside down, and the rules are being rewritten daily. Families are working and studying at home. Some are trying to stay healthy in confined spaces, with limited resources, and often a long way from those they love. When we feel anxious, we're more likely to be irritable with each other, and that causes even more anxiety.

Here are some tips for helping yourself and your family through this crisis and any others that come your way.

MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY

The more our children feel loved, safe, and happy, the less anxious they'll be. So one of the first things you can do as a parent is to manage your own anxiety around COVID-19. Find out the latest reliable information about staying safe, and help everyone in your family to follow the advice. Limit the amount of time you spend reading the anxiety-provoking news. Look for the heartwarming stories of kindness and generosity in this crisis, and share these with your children. Quiet your own heart with God's reassurances and your favorite Bible verses.



Look for heartwarming stories of kindness and generosity in this crisis.

TEACH CALM PRACTICES

Tell your children what you do to calm yourself when you feel anxious so they can learn tips to manage their own fears. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, try some of the ideas in this article so that less of your distress spills onto your family. Find a quiet place to talk to the people who listen to your feelings and help you feel calmer.

NOTICE WHAT THEY'RE FEELING

Pay close attention to what your family is feeling, looking out for signs of worry. Some children go quiet, others might become moody, and some might behave more roughly with those around them or play in ways that are destructive. Children and teenagers might not know how to start a conversation about how they're feeling. Spend time alone with them, doing something that they really enjoy, before opening up a conversation about their concerns.

LISTEN CAREFULLY

Listen to your family members' fears. Stop what you're doing, look into their eyes, and show that you care by hugging or touching them warmly. Explain that it's normal to feel worried when scary things happen in the world, and the best thing to do is to talk about it so you can care for each other and work things out together. Write out each worry on a separate piece of paper and think of practical things you can do together to manage those concerns. Try not to dismiss children's fears or put them down for being worried or they'll be less likely to talk to you about their feelings in the future.

CHECK IN DAILY

A crisis brings up all kinds of different emotions and challenges for each of us. Check in with one another every day by sharing your saddest moments together and comforting each other. Then share your happiest moments and celebrate in a fun way. Tell each other the most surprising thing you learned in the day, or the most beautiful thing you saw or heard, or when you experienced God's love.

BE HONEST

When children ask us hard questions about the pandemic, we need to answer them honestly and simply, without too much extra information. If we "lie" to help them feel better, it will make it harder for them to trust us. You might say something like, "Yes, a lot of people are getting very sick and some of them are dying, but most people get better. Many people in the world are working really hard to find a solution, and lots of people, right here around us, are doing amazing things to take care of others."

STAY BUSY

When negative thoughts and concerns take over our brains, they can make us feel even more worried. Learning a new skill and engaging in hobbies, construction kits, jigsaw puzzles, cooking, reading, mind puzzles, and arts and crafts can help to distract children and teenagers from the spiral of anxious thoughts, especially when everyone joins in.

TRY GRATITUDE

Thankfulness can be a great antidote to anxiety. When we remember the positive things in our lives, we're more likely to feel calmer and more joyful. Go through the alphabet as a family, listing all the things you're thankful for, beginning with each of the letters. Walk through your house and name 10 things you're thankful for in each room.

*When we
feel anxious,
we're more
likely to be
irritable with
each other.*

LEARN TO SELF-SOOTHE

Help your child or teenager make a list of things that help them feel better when they're upset. Sipping cool water and blowing the biggest bubbles possible can help them breathe in naturally calming patterns. Hugs, laughing at jokes and funny video clips, gentle tickling, back rubs, warm bubble baths, playing games, baking bread, making a meal together, being creative, and focusing on the intricate details of nature might be items to put on their list.

BE KIND

When we're compassionate and think of others, we're naturally calmed as well. Check out the kindness activities you can do from home at: https://ted.adventist.org/images/Family/Kindness_home_final.pdf. Help your children to make colorful and encouraging posters to put in the windows of your home to give hope and joy to the people who walk down your street. Make cards to send to lonely relatives and create gifts together.

WORSHIP

In this time of anxiety and stress, focus on Bible verses that bring peace and comfort. Learn them in fun ways and sing Scripture songs based on these verses. Read some of these passages together: Revelation 21; 1 John 4:18; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; 1 Peter 5:7. Act out the story of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41) and reflect on how He calms the storms in our world and in our hearts. If you are looking for creative worship ideas to do at home together, check out

the family worship placemats that you can download and print at: <https://ted.adventist.org/family-ministries/family-spirituality>.

PRAY

At times of major crisis, such as this COVID-19 pandemic, we can become overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness and tragedy. Encourage your family to pray for all the suffering people, those who have lost loved ones, the medical staff, and the scientists who are looking for cures, medicines, and vaccines. Anxious children may need interactive prayers that they can see and experience. Draw around your hands and cut out the shape. Imagine this is the hand of God. Write your worries on the palm of the hand. Then remember that God cares about us very much and we can leave all our worries in His hands.

These are challenging times. None of us has a clear road map about how this pandemic will be resolved. We will have moments of anxiety as we face difficult challenges and decisions. Talking about our dilemmas together, comforting one another, and praying for one another will help us navigate this unknown territory.

But we can be sure that God does have the map; He knows how this will work out, and we know that He is lovingly longing to take us all away from this broken world. One day He will wipe away all our tears forever and calm all our fears with His love.

For now, He is with us and our families through this crisis. He holds us all close to His heart. He cries when we cry, and He hurts when we hurt. He comforts us in all that we are facing so that we can comfort others and pass on His love. And He invites us to hand over all our anxieties to Him, because He cares so much for each of us. ■

This article originally appeared on the European *Signs of the Times* website (<https://st.network>).

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THE PENCIL SHARPENER

COULD GOD CARE ABOUT SOMETHING SO SMALL?



A FEW YEARS AGO my pastor-husband and I were transferred to our third district in the Mountain View Conference. I began looking online for houses, but we couldn't agree on many of them. We made a trip to our new district, got in touch with a realtor, and sent him our list of about 15 homes. He scheduled a four-hour time slot for us.

That morning I woke up at 5:00 and fell to my knees. I began praising God, telling Him that I trusted Him but also asking Him to intercede in our hunt for a new house. It seemed impossible to find something in four hours. I finally said, "Lord, please find a house that my husband and I both would love, and can You do it today?"

THE HUNT

As our realtor took us from house to house, none of them seemed right. Finally the realtor said, "I think you two would like to be more out in the country near the mountains."

We looked at each other and said, "Yes!"

One of the houses we came to was one I had looked at online. The realtor tried to open the lockbox several times, but it wouldn't work. He said, "I'm sorry, but I just can't get in this."

Having only an hour left, I felt disappointed and began to lose hope.

Then the relator told us about another house around the corner. As we drove to it, we liked the neighborhood. We saw the two-car garage (which my husband wanted) and the paved driveway (which I wanted), and we both thought this just might work. As we walked through the house, I noticed that every room was painted exactly to match my décor! I couldn't believe it.

On a side note, one of my favorite hobbies is coloring with wooden pencils. Not long ago I noticed that my pencils were getting dull, and the new sharpener I bought only made them worse. Finally I said, "I need an old-fashioned pencil sharpener!" That day, as we toured the house, we opened the door to another room, and there was the very pencil sharpener I was looking for.

When I pray, one of my favorite Scriptures to repeat is 2 Peter 1:4. God has given us "exceedingly great and precious promises." I know that God prepared this perfect house for us. He cares about everything in our lives, the big and small, even the stress of moving. He had heard me plead with Him and answered my prayer at just the right time. Be sure to spend time with God, claiming His promises today. J

Elaine Buchanan is the prayer ministries coordinator for Mountain View Conference in West Virginia. This article originally appeared in the *Columbia Union Visitor* in March 2019. Reprinted with permission.



The Mountain View Conference Prayer Line is open for praises and intercession Monday mornings at 7:00 and each evening at 7:00. To join, dial 1-605-475-4834, code 708693#.

Play Time

WE ALL NEED A HEALTHY DOSE OF IT!

Those who play rarely become brittle in the face of stress or lose the healing capacity for humor.

Stuart Brown, M.D.

TAKE A MOMENT AND THINK back to those days of long ago when you were a child. Do you remember the fun you had playing hide-and-seek or chasing your friends around in a lively game of tag? Did you ever build a big tent in the living room with your mom's sheets and blankets? Remember the thrill of swinging so high on the park swing that it took your breath away? Or perhaps the joy of building sandcastles at the beach, or maybe just playing games with family and friends at home on Saturday nights while enjoying big bowls of popcorn and juicy apples?

PLAY IS JUST FOR CHILDREN, RIGHT?

Things change in the transition from childhood to adulthood. We became seriously focused on the responsibilities of work, family needs, and church and community obligations, and rightly so. Periodic snatches of "time off" are more typically opportunities to catch up with neglected home chores such as cleaning out that messy closet, washing windows, pulling weeds out of the flower garden, or organizing the garage. It is likewise often viewed as an opportunity to catch up on work assignments. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood we forget about doing something just for pure fun. The very thought seems almost irresponsible.



The ability to participate and enjoy play spontaneously is something innate in all of us.

This concept is a mistake. At any age we all need a healthy dose of play time. It's as important a human need as sleep and breathing fresh air. Taking time to relax and have fun can be vital for fueling the imagination, enhancing problem-solving abilities, infusing our lives with joy and emotional well-being, and enriching relationships. Those who do not give themselves permission to play tend to feel more anxious, experience periods of depression, be less optimistic and less social, and neglect other healthy lifestyle habits.

WHAT IS PLAY?

It's common to think of play for adults as involving planned, specific goal-driven activities, such as a scheduled family visit to the zoo, a staff outing to a restaurant, or a church Saturday night social. Such activities definitely have their place and value.

However, an ever-ready spirit of play is of more benefit to us mentally and physically in the long run. The ability to participate and enjoy play spontaneously is something innate in all of us. And simple things can bring out this spirit in our daily routines, such as sharing a joke with a coworker, playing fetch with the dog, building a snowman in the backyard, going on a bike ride with your spouse with no particular destination in mind, playing "chase me" with a child, or playing table games together with family and friends. There doesn't need to be any specific goal or point to the activity beyond the enjoyment of the moment.



Play also usually includes laughter, thus releasing those "feel good" endorphins so beneficial to total body health.

THERE'S MORE

Play can help:

1. **Relieve stress on our body** by taking our mind momentarily off the pressures of work and pressing commitments.
2. **Promote brain health.** By engaging in fun activities that challenge the brain, such as puzzles and table games, we boost our memory retention and problem-solving skills—definitely beneficial to any age-group.

*We don't
stop playing
because we
grow old;
we grow old
because we
stop playing.*

George Bernard Shaw



*Somewhere
between
childhood
and
adulthood
we forget
about doing
something
just for
pure fun.*

3. **Increase activity.** Play that involves physical activity is obviously the most beneficial. Taking a walk with a friend during a break at work, playing games outdoors with family and friends, skipping stones on the pond, taking a bike ride, or doing some exercises to music have the potential to strengthen the heart, improve lung function, and reduce stress.
4. **Bring us closer to others by boosting relationships.** Playing alone—such as reading a book—has some value, but for improving social skills and bringing joy, vitality, and resilience to relationships, play should involve one or more other people, preferably away from electronic gadgets. Incorporating more humor and play into our interactions with others can improve social skills, keep relationships fresh, heal emotional wounds, and resolve conflicts. It is also a great way to overcome shyness when building new relationships.

Take a few moments to remember what brought you real pleasure in the past.

5. **Keep us young and energetic.** Besides infusing our lives with joy, stress relief, and increased activity, play can improve our resistance to disease, despondency, and depression, thus contributing significantly to overall quality of life.

HOW TO START

Not real sure how to include play in your life? For a start, take a few moments to remember what brought you real pleasure in the past. What engaged all your attention and made time pass effortlessly? The activities that brought you this joy when you were younger are most likely the same ones you could enjoy today—only maybe in a different form. Find out what you like and give it a more prominent spot in your life. Most importantly, allow opportunities to show up spontaneously sometimes—opportunities to laugh and engage in something enjoyable on your own or with others. Yes, it's true: playing is for children, and it's definitely needed for the child in all of us. 1

INFORMATION SOURCES:

www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/benefits-of-play-for-adults.htm

www.nbcnews.com/better/health/adults-need-recess-too-here-s-why-you-should-make-ncna887396

<https://bottomlineinc.com/health/mental-health/why-adults-need-play>

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.

Dear Deborah,

A few weeks ago my husband mentioned my reserved demeanor and uninterested attitude toward friends, our relationship, and family activities. Not long after, my oldest daughter commented, "Mom, you don't seem yourself anymore."

Hearing these observations surprised me since I'm fairly outgoing and upbeat. Their comments definitely caught my attention and confirmed my own concerns. Deep down, I knew something was amiss, but I couldn't put my finger on it exactly. So after a lengthy self-review, the realization of my drift toward isolation hit me hard. And now I don't know what to do. How can I reconnect?

Even worse, I've completely ignored repeated comments from my family about "too much screen time." I'll admit that scrolling through social media and random internet searches for endless hours and for no reason became an obsession. Even though I know it's a waste of time, I inevitably grab my cell phone the first thing every morning. Honestly, I'm addicted to my electronic devices more than I thought. In fact, the thought of not having my phone near me at all times breaks me out in a cold sweat. Please help me find balance and my way back to my family.

*Signed,
Disconnected*

Dear Disconnected,

The scenario you describe isn't unusual. While our electronic devices are necessary and have great advantages, the negative consequences often outweigh the good.

It isn't hard to see why countless individuals struggle to find balance with device usage. But be of good courage! You can regain normalcy, reconnect with family and friends, and—most of all—improve your overall well-being.

Most people are aware that by limiting screen time we can have increased quality and quantity of sleep, fewer headaches, less neck pain, improved vision, and even improved self-image and emotions. However, the negative effects on social connections are often neglected—and many times denied.

Technology is here to stay, so implementing practical ways to maintain balance is crucial. By adopting one or more of the following suggestions, you can be on your way to a healthier and more engaged you!

Pray first thing when your eyes open in the morning, asking God to help you.

Download a phone usage app. Use it to track and limit your screen time.

Place your phone/smart watch in a different room while you exercise.

Encourage "cell-free" periods in your home, especially during dinner and family worship.

Disable notifications and sound alerts.

Finally, pray together as a family and discuss creative options to lessen screen time and reconnect. Holding one another accountable will benefit everyone, and before you know it, a win-win reconnection will occur.

Prayerfully,
Deborah



SEASONS OF *Discouragement*

WE ALL FACE THEM.
HOW CAN WE
CONQUER THEM?

DURING MY HUSBAND'S SECOND YEAR of pastoral ministry, I had serious doubts about making it as a pastor's wife. After an unrelenting season of trial, I was broken, bruised, and bloodied by church hurts, ministry-staff conflict, my own sinful responses, and fallout we couldn't seem to redeem. No one had prepared me to face such an intense season of ministry discouragement, and it nearly did me in.

In the midst of my discouragement, while attending a national conference for pastors' wives, I bumped into a woman I recognized in the hotel elevator. Her seasoned husband pastored a respected, larger church, so I assumed she'd have wisdom to offer me in my trial. Desperately, and probably awkwardly, I reached out to her for a word of comfort or camaraderie.

"Is being a pastor's wife always so hard?" I asked her.

Unsympathetically, she responded, "I love being a pastor's wife. I've never really found it to be that difficult."

Shocked and embarrassed, I nodded silently. *OK, then. I guess it's just me.*

But over the years I've realized it's not just me. In fact, I sometimes think she might be the exception. Most ministry spouses experience plenty of bumps and bruises along the way.

Whether you've been wounded, sinned against, or beaten up by the broken world, there are no quick fixes for discouragement. Healing takes time. As a weary pastor's wife, you need more than a stiff upper lip or dismissive words to recover. You need truth, grace, and salve for your wounds.

YOU'RE NOT IMAGINING IT

Start by acknowledging your challenging reality. At some point in your spouse's ministry tenure, you will almost certainly feel the ache of uncharitable assumptions, harsh judgment, or lack of compassion. You may receive wounding words or apathetic actions. Your spouse's ministry dreams may crumble, their character may be jabbed and poked at, or their methods may be called into question. As your spouse attempts to minister faithfully, friends might disappear.

These hard circumstances will affect you, your spouse, and even your children. Ministry life holds the potential to be unbelievably painful and discouraging in ways your congregation has never considered.

Even if God has placed you inside a wonderful church you love, being a pastor's spouse is hard. Trust that the God of peace will use your experiences to sanctify you (1 Thessalonians 5:23) and strengthen you according to the gospel (Romans 16:25).

ASK FOR HELP

If you're reading this article, you're either discouraged now or wisely preparing for the future. When you wonder if God hears your prayers, how long it will be before He answers, or if He cares about your cries for help, recognize these symptoms as discouragement.

Confess your burdens and cast them on God, who cares for you. Humbly admit your need for help. Look to God as your first source of provision. Talk to trusted friends, family members, or a biblical counselor about your weariness.

Timothy reminds believers in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." Invite your spouse and people who love you into your discouragement for the sake of your endurance. God will use the encouragement of His Word and His Spirit, administered through His people, to help you learn to stand again.

REALIZE YOU'RE NOT ALONE

You're not as isolated in your discouragement as you might believe. Christ is with you, and He sympathizes with you in your weakness. God your Father faithfully hears and answers your cries and is a very present help in times of trouble. He is your mighty counselor and the best listener you'll

find. God encourages you by His Spirit in ways more helpful than you know. As you share in the fellowship of suffering with Christ, God will uphold you with His right hand and comfort you with immeasurable compassion.

And you won't suffer forever. Throughout Scripture, God's people call out to Him for rescue, and He answers. They cry; He saves. They plead for help; He delivers. While discouragement may last for the night, joy will come in the morning, whether here on earth or when united with God in glory.

FIND OTHERS

Pastors' spouses need encouragement. Fifteen years into serving as a pastor's wife, I realize the importance of friendship with other ministry wives. Spending time with pastors' wives who can relate to and bear one another's ministerial burdens can be an extraordinary gift. Pray for God to provide and help you identify Jesus-loving, theologically like-minded ministry spouses with whom you can intentionally develop lasting relationships.

For the sake of your ongoing perseverance in the faith and in your ministry life, commit to gathering regularly with these friendly faces, who will relate to your sorrows, nod their heads in understanding, furrow their eyebrows in sympathy, and chuckle along in knowing recognition, during both encouraging and discouraging seasons of ministry life. You won't regret it.

If you're a pastor's spouse, expect to face seasons of discouragement by preparing strategies and means of encouragement beforehand. If you're already being pounded by a season of discouragement, it's not too late to find encouragement today. Look to God for comfort, and you'll find His help and support in surprising places. Being a pastor's spouse is a difficult job, but God will grant you endurance, renew your joy, and grow you in Christlikeness throughout your calling. 

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THE MORPHING OF MABEL

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS FRAIL—BUT INCREDIBLE—HUMAN BEING?

IT CAN BE helpful to see how God brings about transformation in the lives of ordinary people, so I would like to introduce you to a friend of a friend of mine. Her name is Mabel. This is what my friend, Tom Schmidt, wrote:

MEETING MABEL

The state-run convalescent hospital is not a pleasant place. It is large, understaffed, and overfilled with senile and helpless and lonely people who are waiting to die. On the brightest of days it seems dark inside, and it smells of sickness and stale urine. I went there once or twice a week for four years, but I never wanted to go there, and I always left with a sense of relief. It is not the kind of place one gets used to.

On this particular day I was walking in a hallway that I had not visited before, looking in vain for a few who were alive enough to receive a flower and a few words of encouragement. This hallway seemed to contain some of the worst cases, strapped onto carts or into wheelchairs and looking completely helpless.

As I neared the end of this hallway, I saw an old woman strapped up in a wheelchair. Her face was an absolute horror. The empty stare and white pupils of her eyes told me that she was blind. The large hearing aid over one ear told me that she was almost deaf. One side of her face was being eaten by cancer. There was a discolored and running sore covering part of one cheek, and it had pushed her nose to one side, dropped one eye, and distorted her jaw so that what should have been the corner of her mouth was the bottom of her mouth. As a consequence, she drooled constantly. I was told later that when new nurses arrived, the supervisors would send them to feed this woman, thinking that if they could stand this sight they could stand anything in the building. I also learned later that this woman was 89 years old and *that she had been here, bedridden, blind, nearly deaf, and alone, for 25 years.* This was Mabel.

I don't know why I spoke to her—she looked less likely to respond than most of the people I saw in that hallway. But I put a flower in her hand and said, "Here is a flower for you. Happy Mother's Day." She held the flower up to her face and tried to smell it, and then she spoke. And much to my surprise, her words, although somewhat garbled because of her deformity, were obviously produced by a clear mind. She said, "Thank you. It's lovely. But can I give it to someone else? I can't see it, you know, I'm blind."

I said, "Of course," and I pushed her in her chair back down the hallway to a place where I thought I could find some alert patients. I found one, and I stopped the chair. Mabel held out the flower and said, "Here, this is from Jesus."

That was when it began to dawn on me that this was not an ordinary human being. Later I wheeled her back to her room and learned more about her history. She had grown up on a small farm that she managed with only her mother until her mother died. Then she ran the farm alone until 1950 when her blindness and sickness sent her to the convalescent hospital. For 25 years she got weaker and sicker, with constant headaches, backaches, and stomachaches, and then the cancer came too. Her three roommates were all human vegetables who screamed occasionally but never talked. They often soiled their bedclothes, and because the hospital was understaffed, especially on Sundays when I usually visited, the stench was often overpowering.

Mabel and I became friends over the next few weeks, and I went to see her once or twice a week for the next three years. Her first words to me were usually an offer of hard candy from a tissue box near her bed. Some days I would read to her from the Bible, and often when I would pause she would continue reciting the passage from memory, word-for-word. On other days I would take a book of hymns and sing with her, and she would know all the words of the old songs. For Mabel, these were not merely exercises in memory. She would often stop in mid-hymn and make a brief comment about lyrics she considered particularly relevant to her own situation. I never heard her speak of loneliness or pain except in the stress she placed on certain lines in certain hymns.

It was not many weeks before I turned from a sense that I was being helpful to a sense of wonder, and I would go to her with a pen and paper to write down the things she would say. . . .

During one hectic week of final exams I was frustrated because my mind seemed to be pulled in 10 directions at once with all of the things that I had to think about. The question occurred to me, "What does Mabel have to think about—hour after hour, day after day, week after week, not even able to know if it's day or night?" So I went to her and asked, "Mabel, what do you think about when you lie here?"

And she said, "I think about my Jesus."

I sat there, and thought for a moment about the difficulty, for me, of thinking about Jesus for even five minutes, and I asked, "*What* do you think about Jesus?" She replied slowly and deliberately as I wrote. . . .

"I think about how good he's been to me. He's been awfully good to me in my life, you know. . . . I'm one of those kind who's mostly satisfied. . . . Lots of folks wouldn't care much for what I think. Lots of folks would think I'm kind of old-fashioned. But I don't care. I'd rather have Jesus. He's all the world to me."

And then Mabel began to sing an old hymn:



Jesus is all the world to me,
My life, my joy, my all.
He is my strength from day to day,
Without Him I would fall.
When I am sad, to Him I go,
No other one can cheer me so.
When I am sad, He makes me glad.
He's my friend.

This is not fiction. Incredible as it may seem, a human being really lived like this. I know. I knew her. *How could she do it?* Seconds ticked and minutes crawled, and so did days and weeks and months and years of pain without human company and without an explanation of why it was all happening—and she lay there and sang hymns. *How could she do it?*

The answer, I think, is that Mabel had something that you and I don't have much of. She had power. Lying there in that bed, unable to move, unable to see, unable to hear, unable to talk to anyone, she had incredible power.

YOU CAN TOO

Here was an ordinary human being who received supernatural power to do extraordinary things. Her entire life consisted of following Jesus as best she could in her situation: patient endurance of suffering, solitude, prayer, meditation on Scripture, worship, fellowship when it was possible, giving when she had a flower or a piece of candy to offer.

Imagine being in her condition and saying, "I think about how good he's been to me. He's been awfully good to me in my life, you know. . . . I'm one of those kind who's mostly satisfied." This is the Twenty-third Psalm come to life: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want."

For anyone who really saw Mabel—who was willing to "turn aside"—a hospital bed became a burning bush; a place where this ordinary and pain-filled world was visited by the presence of God. When others saw the life in that hospital bed, they wanted to take off their shoes. The lid was off the terrarium. Then the turn came, with a catch of the breath, and a beating of the heart, and tears. They were standing on holy ground.

Do you believe such a life is possible for an ordinary human being? Do you believe it is possible for you? This is promised in the gospel—the Good News proclaimed by Jesus: "The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." The good news as Jesus preached it is that now it is possible for ordinary men and women to live in the presence and under the power of God. The good news as Jesus preached it is not about the minimal entrance requirements for getting into heaven when you die. It is about the glorious redemption of human life—your life.

It's morphing time. 

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What If?

“WHAT IF . . . ?” Have you ever asked yourself that question?

“What if my spouse was not a pastor, but had a normal 8:00-to-5:00 job?”

“What if my behind-the-scenes ministry is not as accepted as my predecessor’s bold, upfront leadership style?”

“What if my children are singled out and left out because of their father’s calling?” Or “What if they do not grow up to love and serve the Lord?”

“What if the doctor’s report comes back positive?”

“What if I can’t do this anymore or don’t want to?”

No matter what “what if” questions we have pondered, worrying about them upsets our lives and distracts us from the calling God has placed on us.

Ellen White wrote, “The Lord is not pleased to have us fret and worry ourselves out of the arms of Jesus. He is the only source of every grace, the fulfillment of every promise, the realization of every blessing.”¹

We live in a world with real rather than imagined problems. So how can we keep those “what ifs” from controlling our thoughts and emotions?

My sister-in-law serves alongside her husband in the mission field of Indonesia. She and her family face a long list of very real inconveniences and some very real danger: blistering tropical weather; the threat of malaria; shopping in a dirty, crowded market with far less than my neighborhood Kroger; her husband traveling about in poor areas where there are angry tribal people and planes that crash; her

teens living on the edge on motorbikes and with crazy adventures, such as overnight surfing in crocodile-infested ocean water.

She has had many “what if” moments. But she has learned that faith in God is sufficient to help her face the *real* dangers—and more than sufficient for the ones that we live in dread of, as they may never materialize. Even though she knows and claims Bible promises and has grappled with the fact that sometimes God allows suffering—even death—she daily has to lay the “what ifs” down and move forward in trust. Her God, like my God and yours, is able to take care of us and those whom we love, and He asks us—even commands us—not to worry (Matthew 6).

Friends have shared these ways of dealing with “what ifs”:

- Lean in closer to God by reading and memorizing His Word. Try Psalm 27:14; 34:17, 18; 37:4, 5, 7; 46:1; 91; Jeremiah 29:11. Let precious promises become our greatest weapons to chase away fear and worry.
- Take time away to rest and reconnect with Jesus at times of stress and pressure.
- Let the intercessory prayers of trusted family and friends help carry us through times when our own heart may be too numb to pray.
- Reach out to others, focusing on someone else’s needs and desires. This helps to turn our thoughts outward rather than inward.

What are your biggest “what if” questions? As you wrestle with them, I pray that in the end you’ll find a Jesus who loves you with a love that passes all understanding or knowledge (Ephesians 3:19) and a Heavenly Father who in His great glory will give you the power to be strong (Ephesians 3:16). ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 75*, 1893.

Malinda Haley writes from Nashville, Tennessee. The sister-in-law mentioned in this story now serves in Lebanon.



TIPS TO ~~SURVIVE~~ THRIVE



LIVING THROUGH HARD TIMES

MOST OF US HAVE LIVED through what we consider hard times, but nothing like what we've seen with the coronavirus! What can help us when we feel concerned?

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

The Bible has many promises of God's presence. One of the most well-known is Psalm 91. When I was a child, my parents helped me memorize this chapter. We took one verse each day and added more each day.

I heard a story that illustrates verse 4. A fire swept through a farmer's barnyard, burning everything in its wake. When the farmer walked around to survey the damage, he came across a "clump" on the ground. He kicked it with his toe, and out from underneath scurried half a dozen chicks. The mama hen had gathered her babies to herself and protected them with her feathers and wings. The hen herself perished, but her babies were safe.

That's what Jesus does for us. Psalm 46:1 and Joshua 1:9 promise that God is a *present* help, not some faraway being.

SING SONGS

Psalm 32:7 speaks of Jesus as our "hiding place" giving us "songs of deliverance." Singing can have a tremendous influence on our feelings. Many find joy in modern worship songs, but there are also hymns that have stood the test of time and are very comforting. Here are some from the SDA hymnal; sing them or read them and reflect on the words: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," "Be Still, My Soul," "It Is Well With My Soul," "Peace, Perfect Peace," "Wonderful Peace."

REST IN JESUS

Some feel the coronavirus could be one of the pestilences mentioned in the Bible as a sign of the Second Coming. The dictionary tells us that a pestilence is a deadly, overwhelming, highly contagious disease, which is a perfect description of the coronavirus. And if it *is* a foretelling of the coming of Jesus, *praise the Lord!*

Back to Psalm 91: Verses 4-10 tell us how we can be protected from all those evils. Verse 9 says it's because we have made the Lord our *habitation*. Dwelling constantly in Jesus is the secret.

WATCH FOR MIRACLES

Some Christians were fleeing from the authorities because of their faith in Jesus. They ran as fast as they could through mountainous areas, but soldiers were gaining on them. They came upon a cave and thought of hiding, but surely the authorities would look for them there. Without other options, though, they entered and crouched down. Then they saw a spider start spinning a web across the mouth of the cave. As it worked, it created an elaborate web completely across the opening.

When the soldiers came to the cave, they went on, commenting, "If they went in there, they certainly would have broken that spider web." God used a spider web to save His people. God can use *anything*, weak or strong, to protect us!

Remember, with Jesus we are safe *anywhere*; without Jesus we are not safe anywhere. 1

Evelyn Griffin is a retired pastor's wife. She is tremendously grateful that her parents insisted that she learn a Bible verse every day.

MAKE YOUR OWN GAMES



BIBLE GAMES CAN
BE EXPENSIVE.
Here are some that
you can make for
yourselves, and some
that don't need any
preparation at all.



BAG OF BIBLE BITS

Find a medium-sized bag and fill it with objects from Bible stories, such as a stone, a plastic fish, a stick, a glass droplet or gem to represent water, a pearl bead, a coin, a star shape, a piece of white cloth, an angel drawing, a small bottle of perfume, a piece of bread, a small basket, something gold, a toy sheep, bird, tree, or boat, etc. Take turns pulling something from the bag and then naming a Bible story that includes the object. If the object is chosen again, the player has to name a different Bible story. Collect one point for every Bible story named. You can also play cooperatively by choosing an object and working together to list as many Bible stories as possible.

STORY SCAVENGER

Choose a Bible story and read it together. Set a timer for 5 minutes. Race with your family to see how many objects (or pictures of objects) mentioned in the story you can find in and around your home.



CREATIVE PROVERBS

Choose a chapter from the book of Proverbs. Choose one of the chapters in which each verse is a different proverb. Ask each person to choose a proverb from the chapter without telling anyone else which verse they have chosen and then find their own way of illustrating it. You can mime the proverb, arrange a collection of objects to illustrate it, draw a picture or comic strip, rewrite the verse in modern language, turn it into a poem, etc. After 10 minutes, show what you've created and see who can guess which verse you're each illustrating. Talk about how the wisdom in these verses can help us in our lives today.



Find or cut six blank wooden cubes. You can buy wooden cubes in craft stores or cut your own. Use a fine permanent marker to write one letter on each side of the cubes. (See below for the letters to write on each cube.)

Turn and rearrange 3 to 6 of the cubes until you can spell the name of a person in the Bible. Write the name on a sheet of paper and see if you can find more than 100 names. Include the Bible reference for the verse where you found each name. Make sets of the cubes, give them to your friends at church, and see who can find the most names.

Cube 1: J – A – D – E – S – N

Cube 2: M – O – R – G – I – T

Cube 3: E – H – A – L – B – K

Cube 4: A – U – E – V – Z – M

Cube 5: P – L – N – C – O – R

Cube 6: D – H – S – P – I – T

CREATIVE BIBLE CHALLENGE

Gather lots of different craft supplies in a large box. Take a stack of index cards and write a different creative Bible challenge on each card. Here are some ideas to get you started. You and your family can add as many as you like:

- Make a thank-you card from Adam and Eve to God, thanking Him for making the Garden of Eden for them to live in.
- Design a dress for Esther to wear when she goes to invite the king to her dinner party.
- Imagine what your room will look like in heaven and make a model of it.
- Imagine what it looked like inside the ark. How would you design the space so that every animal could live safely and it would be easy for Noah and his family to care for all the creatures?
- Design an award for one of your Bible heroes.
- Create a special reminder for your family that will encourage them to make Sabbath a delight for each person in your home.
- Choose a favorite Bible verse and find a creative way to illustrate it.
- Choose a favorite story from the Bible. Make and write your own mini storybook.
- Design a coat of many colors for Joseph to wear.
- Imagine you could design a flower or animal for God to create. What would it look like?
- Create a scene from your favorite Bible story.
- Make a comic-strip style story about your favorite Bible character.

Add more challenge cards whenever you have a new idea. Work on the creative challenges on your own or as a family. Keep looking for interesting craft materials to add to your box.



NAME CHAIN

Sit in a circle and ask the youngest person to name a character in the Bible. The next person has to name someone whose name begins with the last letter of the first Bible name called out: SaraH – HamaN – NabaL – LuKE – ElizabethH – HeroD – etc. Take turns around the circle, naming characters in this way. No name can be used more than once. See how long you can make the chain before you run out of new names to add.



BIBLE LIBRARY

Take 66 blank index cards and write the name of each book of the Bible on a separate card. Write the books of the Old Testament in blue and the books of the New Testament in red so you can easily separate them.



ONE-PLAYER CHALLENGE:

See how quickly you can arrange the 66 cards in the correct order. Once you have finished, use your Bible to check that you have put everything in the right place. Start by using just the New Testament cards.

BONUS ACTIVITY:

Invite each person to choose a card with a Bible book written on it. Provide marker pens and ask them to decorate the side of the card that has the name of the book written on it with something that illustrates the name of the book, its theme, or a story in the book.



FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Shuffle the cards and share them equally between players. You might like to use just the Old Testament or New Testament cards to start with. Time yourself to see how quickly you can place your cards in the correct order, one book at a time.

SERIOUS CHALLENGE:

Deal 6 cards to each player. Don't let anyone see your cards. Without speaking to each other, place the cards face up on a stack in the middle of the table in the correct order. Remember that your group doesn't have all the books, so the names will not be placed one after the other as they are in the Bible. You have to look at each other carefully to guess who might have the card with the next available book in the sequence. For example, you start the game, and no one has Genesis. When no one rushes to put down Genesis, you wonder who has the next card. So you look around the group to see if anyone else looks eager to put down a

card. You have Deuteronomy, but you need to wait and see if anyone puts down Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers. If you put your card down too fast and someone has a previous card, then you need to reshuffle, deal, and start the game again. Each person has to be ready with their cards and judge the best time to place their card on the stack because no one knows which cards have been dealt and who has them. You are all working silently together to complete the task of placing all the cards in your hands on the stack in the correct sequence, even though you will not have every card. You can also change the number of cards each person is given.

CHARACTER BUILDING

bravery

curiosity

honesty

wisdom

- Take 25 cards and write a character strength on each card: appreciating God's creation; bravery; caution; creativity; gratitude; humility/modesty; kindness; love; social responsibility; enjoyment of learning; perseverance; forgiveness; curiosity; self-control; teamwork; wisdom; honesty; social intelligence; fairness/justice; hopefulness; sense of humor; leadership skills; enthusiasm; spirituality; compassion/empathy.
- Stack the cards facedown.
- Turn over the top card. Roll a dice and follow the instructions below.
 - Name a Bible character who showed this character strength.
 - Find a Bible verse about this character strength.
 - Tell how you have shown this character strength in your own life in the past week, or how you want to practice it in the week to come.
 - Tell someone in the group when you saw them practice this character strength.

5 – Describe a time when Jesus used this character strength.

6 – Explain why this character strength is important to grow in your life.

Use this game to inspire your family to grow more like Jesus.

Karen Holford is a grandma to Zara (8), Leo (6), and Max (4). She loves playing games with them, especially games that help them to learn more about God.

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

HELDERBERG COLLEGE

The Helderberg College Shepherdess Chapter (HCSC) meets at least twice a month during the academic calendar. Programs and activities help train and nurture spouses of the theology students. The group aims to provide opportunities for personal and spiritual growth, clarify the role of a pastor's spouse, help spouses cope with challenges, and train them for team ministry. They conducted many sessions of prayer with a WhatsApp group, with a focus on praying for one another.



The Helderberg College Shepherdess Chapter in South Africa had a successful year, with many programs to encourage a personal spiritual journey.



Pastoral spouses from Helderberg College in South Africa meet together to remind one another to "Turn your worries into prayers" (Philippians 4:6).

SOUTH AFRICA

Adele Beukes reports that the Northern Conference in South Africa chose activities to involve ministerial spouses in areas of spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental health. They conducted cooking demonstrations of healthy breakfast foods, such as waffles, lentil dishes, and a chickpea spread. The pastors' spouses were also encouraged to give Bible studies, preach, and get involved in Sabbath School for adults and children. They led many outreach programs, such as giving clothes to the needy, hosting luncheons for senior citizens, providing meals on wheels, helping at soup kitchens, visiting hospitals and prisons, leading singing lessons, sharing Bibles and religious literature, hosting Vacation Bible School, conducting fitness classes, and much more.



Ministerial spouses in South Africa's Northern Conference conducted cooking demonstrations.



They also held Vacation Bible School during school holidays.



One outreach activity was teaching Zumba classes.

SOUTH NAMIBIA CONFERENCE - SWAKOPMUND DISTRICT



Pastor and Shepherdess Matomola (far right and far left) distributed one of six wheelchairs, helping a man who had only a stick and could not balance himself.



On the west coast of Namibia, most people are unemployed and struggle to make ends meet. Houses are built with wood pallets or cartons, and some do not have electricity. In May 2019 over 100 children were served a meal.



During the conference camp meeting in August 2019, Shepherdesses Imakumbili and Sinvula participated in the distribution of clothes to communities in need.

OPUWO DISTRICT



Shepherdesses helped women harvest maize and put it on the roof of the shelter to dry.



They also distributed clothes and food to the Himba people at one of the cell groups on the outskirts of Opuwo.



Shepherdesses pitched in to help Himba women fetch water from the dam. The village is approximately 12 kilometers (7 miles) from Opuwo, and the dam is 300 meters (1,000 feet) from the homestead.

HARDAP REGION



Shepherdess Greeff started a branch Sabbath School for children in Maltahöhe in the south of Namibia.



The children loved receiving Bible storybooks.



They also loved receiving donated toys.



A new branch Sabbath School also started in Mariental.

BOTSWANA UNION CONFERENCE



In October 2019, a retirees retreat was held at Tati Siding at Ebat Guest Lodge, and retirees were honored for their work.



The two coordinators of the Gantsi chapter held a seminar at Kalfontein in Botswana.

MOZAMBIQUE UNION MISSION



Shepherdesses won 20 souls during Impact Maputo Evangelism in June and October 2019.



The Central and North Missions donated 12 Adventist women's Bibles to Shepherdesses who were cyclone victims.



South Mission Shepherdesses visited a home for the elderly to donate fruit and hygienic supplies.

CAPE CONFERENCE



Mrs. N. Lefume, Cape Conference Shepherdess coordinator, reports that Shepherdesses are following the Revival and Reformation daily Bible reading chapters and meet every Wednesday to fast and pray for the conference and their families.



Shepherdesses from Cape Conference embarked on the 31 Days of Prayer challenge, praying for spouses and children. They also share devotions on WhatsApp.

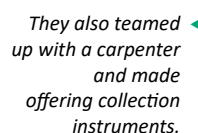


Shepherdesses from Cape Conference met together to fellowship.

MOZAMBIQUE



They worked on a sewing project with a donated sewing machine.



They also teamed up with a carpenter and made offering collection instruments.



Sylvia Muvuti shared that Shepherdesses in the North-East Mission of Mozambique held a two-day workshop. They had seminars on challenges of pastors' wives, prayer evangelism, and finance.

Southern Asia Division



The pastors and spouses of the Northern India Union Section met at Hapur near New Delhi.



Shepherdesses in Northeast India gathered for a prayer conference.



In October Shepherdesses met in Bhutan, India.



In October Shepherdesses met in Khunti, India.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division



Last summer a Shepherdess and Women's Ministry convention was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Special Quotes



Over 300 women attended, and representatives from GC Shepherdess and Women's Ministry participated.



In August 2019, Shepherdess leaders gathered in Northern Ghana for meetings.



Women in Western Nigeria learned how to make detergent.



In July 2019, Shepherdesses gathered together in the Mankranso District. Donations were made for the children and for the church to purchase a pulpit.



In September 2019, Shepherdesses from Ogun Conference in the Western Nigeria Union met together for their annual retreat at Babcock University campus. The event included a foot-washing service.



In April 2019, Shepherdesses visited the Esaase-Bontefufuo District and joined the church for Sabbath and divine service. They made donations to the church and children's department.



Ondo Mission held a retreat.



Meetings were held in Southern Ghana.



Ministerial couples gathered together for meetings in Libreville, Gabon.



A young PK attended the meetings with Mom in Southern Ghana Union Conference.

Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 483

Instead of thinking of your discouragements, think of the power you can claim in Christ's name. Let your imagination take hold upon things unseen. Let your thoughts be directed to the evidences of the great love of God for you. Faith can endure trial, resist temptation, bear up under disappointment. Jesus lives as our advocate. All is ours that His mediation secures. . . . All experiences and circumstances are God's workmen whereby good is brought to us.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 488

When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 12

Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330

PRAY BIG

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