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Trust Me

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ON THE COVER

It's hard for many of us to trust someone, even God. Maybe that's why Jesus talked about having faith as small as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20). He knows it's a challenge for us! While He was on earth, Jesus praised faith when He saw people trusting in Him—and He wants to help us rest in His love and care. May this issue encourage you to grow your faith in the One who is worthy of it.





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EDITORIAL

WE SERVE A LOVING AND PERSONAL GOD who wants us to know that we can trust Him.

In the last issue I wrote about a time when God seemed to show me the same Bible text over and over in various ways: "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).

About a year later I had forgotten the text and was back to my old habits of stress and anxiety. I felt overwhelmed coordinating meetings, retreats, and speaking appointments.

At a women's ministries leadership meeting I was coordinating, the devotional speaker talked about resting in Jesus. Comparing a feather to our relationship with Him, she dropped the feather and we watched as it floated gently to the floor. "This is how we need to rest with Jesus in all of our stresses, problems, and trials," she said.

Suddenly, I just relaxed and took a deep breath. I prayed silently, "Lord, I know You are speaking to me again. Please help me to rest in You just like a feather that gently floats to the ground."

Since then, God has reminded me through feathers to trust Him. Sometimes when I'm walking and praying about a need or a situation that troubles me, I'll suddenly see a feather on the ground and sense Jesus' presence. It's like He's saying, "I've got this. Trust Me." And I'm not looking for feathers. When I try to look for them, I never find any. One time I was so discouraged that I wanted to walk away from ministry. Jerry and I were attending a meeting near the ocean. That morning I walked to the beach and found a cove tucked between big rocks. I noticed that the sand there was covered with seagull feathers. It was like a carpet. (No, I didn't see any dead seagull bodies!) I knew God was telling me to be of good courage; He was in charge and would see me through. A few months later I returned to that cove to see if there were feathers covering the beach, and there were none.

Another time Jerry and I were in India speaking to pastors, elders, and spouses in multiple locations. As our itinerary drew to an end, I got an unexpected request to speak to college students on Friday night and all day Sabbath. I felt exhausted. What would I say to this age-group? Immediately, I became nervous and filled with doubt. I prayed off and on through the night.

When our meetings were over, we gathered outside for a picture. Suddenly I had an impulse to look at the ground, and there was a feather. God had blessed what He had me share.

I know you're probably thinking, *Of course you find feathers outdoors*. Yes, you can rationalize it away. But I have learned that from big things to small, He cares about everything in our lives.

Janet Page serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge."

Psalm 91:4

TASTE AND Jee

TRY THESE 10 IDEAS FOR WHETTING YOUR APPETITE FOR THE BIBLE AND FEELING SATISFIED WITH YOUR DEVOTIONS.

AFTER A FEW MONTHS of enjoying noodles, rice, and seaweed while serving as an English teacher in Japan, I found myself craving some comfort food. At a restaurant I ordered the creamiest, richest dish I could think of—fettuccine Alfredo. As I relished each bite of the pasta slathered in cheesy white sauce, I began to feel full, incredibly happy, and amazingly satisfied. Psalm 63:5 says, "I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods" (NIV). God wants us to feel full, happy, and satisfied when we spend time with Him in the Word!

George Müller, a famous prayer warrior, shares one of his Bible study secrets in his pamphlet *Soul Nourishment First*: "The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon his precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul." What if my devotional time has become stale, very brief, or nonexistent? Yes, even as a pastor's wife, sometimes I have secretly fought the feeling that reading the Bible is like eating shredded wheat—good for me, but not that satisfying. That's when I have to try a new approach. Here are 10 ideas to spice up your devotional time.

1. Go outside. When I try to read the Bible, it's easy to get distracted by my cell phone, to-do list, kids, or even pets. Going outside takes care of that (especially if I leave my phone inside). Did you know that the brain engages better during the physical activity of walking?

2. Memorize Scripture. Make use of the moments while driving or even washing dishes. Try the Bible Memory App that uses typing as a help to memorization. Set a memorization goal with a friend. Also, reading a chapter aloud twice every morning and evening for a week makes memorization easier.

I've fought the feeling that reading the Bible is like eating shredded wheat.

3. Read a GLOW tract. Why not read a GLOW tract or other piece of sharing literature? You can even highlight statements that are meaningful to you. Then create a two-sentence summary of what you've read and what it meant to you, and practice saying it aloud. When you have the opportunity to share with someone during your day, you'll have something to say.

4. Have hymnal devotions. The Adventist hymnal is fertile ground for devotions. Choose a hymn and read or sing it. Then look up the biblical references the hymn uses in the index at the back of the book and take time to think about and meditate on each one.

5. Find joy in journaling. Elisabeth Elliot writes, "Copying the words [of a verse] into my journal helps me to obey them on the spot."1 Although writing by hand has lost popularity these days, writing out Scripture helps me to focus on the words and to apply them. Imagine the joy of the faithful scribes who copied out the Scriptures by hand and how those words must have impacted their lives. In your quiet place, try writing a verse or reference to some verses at the top of a page and jotting down your thoughts about those verses, or find some colored pencils and draw a picture of something that pops out at you. It's between you and God and doesn't need to be "good enough" for other eyes, but it will serve to remind you of a special moment with your Best Friend.

6. Go to the Gospels. Listening to or reading a story from the life of Jesus is like a shot of adrenaline for me. I seem to see the point easily and can apply the lessons to my life immediately. Ellen White said, "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones."² Must you spend exactly an hour? Not necessarily, but the more we think about Jesus, the more wonderful He becomes to us. We may just find the experience so inspiring that we don't want to stop.

7. Change it up. If you normally study the Bible before your prayer time, why not switch the order and pray first for a change? There's no one correct way.³ Try this model: 15 minutes studying the Bible, 15 minutes reading another spiritual book, 15 minutes praying. Or take more time than you have before—if you've habitually carved out 15 minutes for Bible study and prayer, why not try 20? And if you've enjoyed 45 minutes regularly, why not give God an hour?

8. Consider audio. While many people like to read, you may sometimes prefer to listen to a Bible story or a free online sermon or podcast from AudioVerse.org, for example. Actually, Bible apps such as YouVersion or Blue Letter Bible let you listen to Scripture being read while giving you the chance to read along on your device and highlight or take notes electronically. They also offer useful Bible reading (or listening) plans.

9. Choose a verse of the day. During your time with Jesus, choose one verse for the day. It's better to focus on one or two verses than to read chapters without thinking about them. When you carefully study a verse, picking it apart phrase by phrase, the passage sticks in your mind and becomes food for your soul during the day. To personalize what you read, put your name in the verse. For example: "Bless the Lord, O (your name here); and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" (Psalm 103:1).

10. Try inductive study. When someone finally showed me how to study the Bible inductively, I was awed that I could find spiritual food for myself every time I opened the Word! Amazingly, God speaks to me, just as He would speak to a preacher or anyone else. The first step is observation, or objective fact-gathering (What does the text say?). I read it extremely slowly, asking simple questions that begin with who, what, when, where, and why. Next comes interpretation (What does the text mean?). This is where I look at the author's meaning and historical context, making connections with other passages in the Bible. Then comes application (What does this text mean to me?). Applications to my life begin to surface, and I ask God what He wants to tell me personally through that passage.

Taste and See

The more we think about Jesus, the more wonderful He becomes to us.

APPLY IT

No matter what you read or listen to during your personal Bible study time, the key is to apply what you have learned. Simply ask, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Listen for God's voice. "When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God."⁴ Then do what He tells you. "Whatever He says to you, do it" (John 2:5).

KEEP IT

Psalm 25:5 says, "On You I wait all the day." How do you keep the Lord with you all day? Here are some ideas. Before you leave that holy ground where God has spoken, look for a takeaway that can stay with you. Try writing the thought or verse on an index

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card to put on your desk at work or carry in your purse. Make a note on your phone, or e-mail or text it to yourself so you can remember it throughout the day. At lunchtime, take a moment to pray and review what you learned in the morning. Ask the kids at the dinner table if they can remember the thought from family worship.

SHARE IT

How about telling someone your verse for the day or what you heard God say to you? When I first attended an Adventist college in the United States, I was happily astonished—young people were sharing at the breakfast table what they had learned during their devotions. You can also send a text or e-mail sharing something that impacted you or post it on social media.

IT DOES MATTER

You may wonder, "Does spending time in the Word really make a difference?" Yes, it really does. "Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them."⁵

Just like I had to be intentional to find that familiar, rich, satiating meal in Japan, we obtain the best results when we eagerly, expectantly take time to wait for God to meet with us in our devotions. God is willing, wanting, and waiting to fill us and satisfy our deepest longings. Thankfully, what He gives us is more lasting and nourishing than even the richest and most delicious fettuccine Alfredo.

¹ Elisabeth Elliot, *Keep a Quiet Heart*, p. 60.

⁴ The Desire of Ages, p. 363.

⁵ *Prayer*, p. 157.

Heather Krick, originally from South Africa, is married to Bill, who directs literature ministries in the Pacific Union Conference. She enjoys traveling, sharing God's Word with others, and practicing the art of hospitality along with their two teenage daughters.

² The Desire of Ages, p. 83.

³ "The Bible should never be studied without prayer." "The reading of the word of God prepares the mind for prayer." Ellen White, *Prayer*, pp. 95, 31.

GETTING REAL

CONSIDER A QUESTION that may make you uncomfortable to answer: Do you ever get weary of your spouse's calling? Their job? Their dreams and visions and aspirations?

I can remember in the midst of the demands of church life—board meetings, church building projects, evangelism efforts, and everything from welcoming newborn babies to conducting premarital counseling, weddings, and funerals—it felt like there was little time for me! It seemed that sometimes my needs got pushed to the side.

I could easily have indulged in self-pity, yet God spoke to me powerfully about ministry and the position that is mine to support and encourage my husband in his calling.

You probably know of George Müller, the man who asked for nothing yet ran huge orphanages, all from prayer and donations. One tiny part of that story leaped off the page as I read about it—a part I had not remembered. Right after George announced to his church that he was going to start an orphanage, Mary, his wife, got angry. She banged pots around in the pantry while George was talking to her. She displayed a bitter attitude. She doubted and was pessimistic and cross.

What if Mary's heart had not softened? Think of it! No orphanages would have succeeded. George's dreams and visions would not have flourished without the support of Mary.

My heart was stirred. My spouse's work of faith—of building up churches, spurring on a new vision, organizing events, and working with church leaders—none of it will go as far if I'm home wallowing in my own self-pity and discouragement. It is not always easy to be a pastor's spouse. I am human. I grow weary. I get discouraged and lonely. I cry because it's hard at times. Yet I press on and push through these tough seasons.

I've asked God to remove the memories of disappointing moments and replace them with joy. There really isn't room in ministry for self-pity. It certainly is not profitable to harbor bitterness and resentment.

I like what Leslie Ludy shares: "When discouragement puts the bait in front of me to become dismally introspective, I have found that it is crucial to say an immediate *no* to that voice, and immediately shift my focus to serving or helping someone else. It might be as simple as taking a few minutes to get my focus off myself by praying for an unsaved loved one or [lifting] up the specific prayer needs of my husband, children, and extended family. Or I might take some time to write a quick note of appreciation or encouragement to someone in my life. Making the deliberate choice to bless someone else through prayer or encouragement can go a long way in preventing discouragement from turning me inward and gaining a foothold in my soul."*

If you find yourself giving in to self-pity, maybe it is time to ask God to change your heart, because He is probably getting ready to use your spouse (and you) for a greater purpose!

* Leslie Ludy, "Tuning Out the Voice of Discouragement," Set Apart Girl, https://setapartgirl.com/tuning-out-voice-discouragement/.

Malinda Haley is a pastor's wife, mother, nurse, and—above all—God's humble servant. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, Steve, who is president of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference.

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BABY SAMSON

AFTER THE TRAGEDY, I QUESTIONED GOD—AND HE GAVE ME AN ANSWER.

GOOD NEWS RARELY COMES early in the morning—especially in the mission field. Whenever my phone rings after 9 at night and before 7 in the morning, my stomach tightens and I feel a burst of adrenaline course through my body.

I don't remember exactly when my phone rang, but it is etched in my memory as being 6 in the morning. Anyway, I was not prepared for what I heard.

"Baby Samson is dead," the caller said in a shaky voice. "We don't know what happened, but his parents took him to the hospital late last night and he was pronounced dead just a little while ago. We will be getting together with the family in a little bit to make funeral arrangements."

Baby Samson's parents were new Adventists. Having been married only a few short years, they had had trouble getting pregnant, which, in the local culture, was considered a bad sign. It was expected that every couple should have a baby within the first year of marriage, but no matter what they tried or which doctors they went to, this couple could not conceive.

Hearing of their trouble—because even private news is everyone's business in a small village an older Adventist widow in their village visited them. I didn't really know much about this grandma except that every Sabbath she would tell me about how God had blessed her that week and how thankful she was for His care. She would smile broadly as she excitedly recounted how God had provided muchneeded food or the few dollars she owed for her electric bill. Though she could not read, she couldn't help but ooze the love of Jesus to everyone with whom she talked.

So when she visited the young couple, she told them of how God had been caring for her and how she had learned to trust Him with her needs. She told them remarkable stories of how God had heard the prayers of desperate women in the Bible who had cried for babies, and then she offered to pray for the young couple. "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"

Psalm 91:1, 2, NIV

"If you would allow me, I would like to pray for you and ask God to give you a baby. I know that my God can do it! We just need to ask!" Grandma encouraged them, her voice strong and her face reflecting her deep and unwavering faith.

The young couple agreed, so Grandma prayed. And within a few months, the young woman became pregnant. The young couple was thrilled. Wanting to learn more about the God who had answered Grandma's prayer, they asked for Bible studies and were soon baptized. Their story impressed their parents and siblings, and soon several of them began attending church. As the young woman's belly grew, so did the number of family members who studied the Bible along with them.

Then the happy day came when baby Samson was born. Few were happier than Grandma, who had been adopted into the extended family.

Within a couple months of Samson's birth, the couple's entire extended family had been baptized and were attending church in the city a half hour away, filling nearly one half of the church building. As their story spread, others in their village began attending church with them. It was a perfectly beautiful story of a church growing organically because of how God had answered and was answering prayers. Until my phone rang.

WHY?

As the news sunk in, I began to prepare for the severalday-long funeral that would begin in a few hours. Funerals are never pleasant, but funerals for children are the worst. Everything about them is wrong. Children are not supposed to die. Parents are not supposed to endure such grief and pain. It just was not fair or right. Why had Samson died? Where was God in all of this? What was the family going to think about God now that the baby was dead?

I had to believe that they were praying fervently even as the doctor shook his head and told the parents that there was nothing he could do and that the baby was dead. Now what would happen?

I was a bit surprised at how much I was struggling with this loss. After all, I was a missionary and the wife of a pastor. If anyone could handle this situation, I should have been the most prepared. Yet I felt empty, confused, angry. Why had God allowed baby Samson to die? He was the reason so many of his family had chosen to leave their Buddhism behind, had embraced the Creator God, and were learning to follow His ways. Didn't God understand that? Didn't He know that by allowing baby Samson to die, He would completely undo everything He had done so far?

I remember falling to my knees and begging God for answers. I felt that as a missionary I was expected to have an answer. But I was empty. Far from a peace-offering explanation, all I had were more questions, questions that I was afraid would reveal my own humanness and betray my right to be a missionary. Eventually the jumble of thoughts racing through my head quieted, and I sank into silence. And that was where God met me. It wasn't an audible voice I heard, but God clearly spoke to me.

Baby Samson

"The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."

Psalm 147:11, NIV

"Amy," He said, "I know you don't understand right now. But someday you will. For now, I just need you to trust Me."

I suddenly felt a sense of peace wash over me. No longer did I feel the desperate need to have answers for baby Samson's family or the church. No longer was I angry that God had let the family down. Instead of emptiness, confusion, and anger, I had a deep and profound sense of peace, and my mental vision was lifted from the pain of the moment to an eternal perspective that gave me hope because of the promise that one day this will all be made right.

The next couple days we spent at the church supporting the family and grieving together. After the burial, I sat next to the young mother, who was slumped on a pew. She was clearly exhausted, both physically and mentally. It had been a couple days since she had slept. Her clothes were mismatched, and her hair was pulled back in a messy ponytail. As her body was again wracked with sobs, I wrapped my arm around her shoulder, pulled her limp body to me, and cried with her.

When her sobs subsided, I shared with her what God had told me. "It's not for us to understand right now. We are just to trust that God knows what He is doing. One day He will make this all right." I spoke softly, not knowing if she could even hear what I was saying, never mind internalize it. A couple days later we were surprised to see Samson's father walk into Sabbath School. The pain and grief were still raw and real, but I sensed that he had come because he needed the strength and support from our church family. At the end of Sabbath School he asked if he could share something he had learned.

"We didn't know what to do. We were full of questions and were confused. Why didn't God answer our prayers? Why did He allow our baby to die? Did He care about us anymore? Had He forgotten us?" the father explained. "We were so discouraged and felt hopeless. But then God said, 'I don't need you to understand right now. I just need you to trust Me. One day I will make this all right."

There was not a dry eye in the church, least of all mine. God had used the message that had given *me* hope to give *them* hope. And I learned a valuable lesson. Missionaries, pastors' spouses, pastors—we're all human just like everyone else, and we often don't have the answers any more than anyone else does. Yet in our desire to promote and demonstrate God's power and love, we put undue pressure on ourselves and may at times play the role of God by trying to provide explanations for things that maybe don't have answers.

Sometimes our role is to cry and hurt and grieve—and to remind our flock that there is more to the story than what our human eyes can see and that one day all things will be made right. Sometimes He just needs our blind trust.

Amy Whitsett is the associate director of the Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions (CEAR). She and her husband and two young sons served as missionaries in Southeast Asia for 16 years. While she believes that they contributed to the mission in the fields they served, she feels that she learned far more than she ever taught. She is happy to now be training others to serve their communities as Jesus did and encouraging them to see problems as opportunities to deepen their trust in God, who is our only source of hope and peace.

TIPS TO SUBVIUE THRIVE



MAKING PLANS

Usually we make many plans for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, but do we have plans for other times? God has made plans for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11-13), so it would be well for us to follow His example. Without a plan, things frequently do not happen. Here are some plans you might want to consider:

HOUSE PLANS:

- Make a list of dishes your family likes that you can refer to when you can't think of something to cook.
- Create a calendar for a rotating once-amonth cleaning or organizing project: pantry, storeroom, kitchen cabinets (or some other necessary duty).

SPOUSE PLANS:

- Help your spouse schedule time for the family (and for the two of you), making suggestions for activities.
- Think of what attracted your spouse to you in the beginning and focus on those and other positive traits, encouraging them in ministry.
- Share meaningful conversations, keeping communication open.

KID PLANS:

- Help your children clean their rooms and organize their toys, teaching them how to keep them tidy.
- Guide children in knowing how to have personal devotions, including showing them how to plan them.
- Strive to have at least one family sit-down meal together each day (or week) without the presence of media. Make it "family sharing time."

SPIRITUAL PLANS:

- Make a plan for your personal devotional life, which could include:
 - Select a Bible text each day and write a sentence (or more) of what it says to you personally.
 - 2. Read the Bible through in a year.
 - 3. Integrate the Spirit of Prophecy into your devotional time.
 - 4. Keep a prayer journal, including a section for "answered prayers" to review when discouraged.
 - 5. Set your phone to remind you regularly to offer a short, silent prayer.
- Plan morning and evening worships for the family. Here are some ideas:
 - Start a discussion with a statement such as: "Share something special/ fun/interesting/funny that happened today."
 - 2. Play "I spy." Have family members share how they "spied" God today, such as: "God helped me with my test in school." "I saw a girl give a food gift card to a homeless woman." "I watched a high school kid stoop to help a little boy who fell on the playground and scraped his knee." "I saw a boy intervene in a bullying situation."

The Holy Spirit will help you know the best plan for yourself, your spouse, and your family. All you need to do is ask.

> **Evelyn Griffin** is a retired pastor's wife. She and her pastor-husband have four children and 14 grandchildren.

-LIFESTYLE

INVISIBLE Enemies

VIRUSES AND OTHER MICROBES HAVE CHANGED HUMAN HISTORY—AND CONTINUE TO DISRUPT OUR LIVES.

It is sometimes as dangerous to be run into by a microbe as by a trolley car.

-James Walsh



12 ISSUE TWO 2020 WE ARE BORN FRESH, clean, and alone. However, this condition lasts only until our first breath, when the human body starts to become a cooperative venture with other creatures. These creatures, generally single-celled bacteria, are called microbes and are so small that they are measured in millionths of a meter—visible only via highpowered microscopes.

They arrive to us in the air we breathe, water we drink, things we touch, and food we eat. Some live outside of the body—on our skin, hair, mouth, eyes, and ears—but most live in our intestinal tract. These helpful microbes are called symbionts. Our very survival is dependent on the mutually beneficial relationship we were designed to experience with them. They keep our bodily functions in balance, while we give them protection and nourishment. On the outside these symbionts help keep us groomed. Inside the body they aid in food digestion, protect us from disease, and even produce vitamins.

There are other varieties of microbes that are not symbionts. Some are selfsufficient, free-living, relatively harmless creatures that can be found in dirt, oceans, lakes, streams, forest floors, kitchen countertops, toilets, etc. They live, multiply, and die on their own.

SMALL AND DEADLY

Parasites characterize a much larger class of microbes that are neither symbiotic nor free-living. They live in us too, taking nourishment and energy from us without giving anything beneficial back. This group includes viruses, vanishingly small creatures that invade our body cells. They use fuel and house themselves within the cells, altering the cell DNA in order to replicate and invade the entire body, usually causing sickness. The body's

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Infectious diseases along with natural disasters are the top culprits in causing death, sorrow, and suffering globally.

defense system is designed to fight back vigorously and, in most cases, effectively destroys and eliminates these invaders. However, the rate of speed by which the sickness spreads throughout the body, and/or the already compromised health status of the individual, can hinder or seriously compromise the body's ability to effectively win the battle against the invaders.

In the absence of a protective vaccine or immunity from previous exposure, these infectious pathogens can spread quickly from one stricken individual through a community of unprotected people living closely together. Conditions being just right, an infection can race through a population, thus becoming an *epidemic*. An *endemic* occurs if the disease becomes a permanent feature of a region. As in the situation of COVID-19, a *pandemic* occurs when a disease spreads from country to country, thus becoming a global crisis.

HISTORICAL KILLERS

Infectious diseases along with natural disasters are the top culprits in causing death, sorrow, and suffering globally. Human responses can include fear, panic, greed, humiliation, anger, blame, hate, and violence. But at the same time, reason, compassion, and amazing scientific effort balance the record.

Epidemic, endemic, and pandemic diseases have been known to force enormous and catastrophic changes in societies and governments, often altering the course of human history. Some of these deadly big players of the past include:

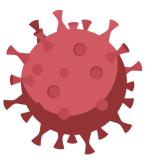
- 1. The Bubonic Plague (Black Death), 1346—To this day it is recorded as one of history's most gruesome diseases. It was caused by Oriental rat fleas carried by ships across the Mediterranean to Europe. Spreading rapidly from east to west, it killed up to 200 million people, cutting Europe's population by 30 to 50 percent and forever changing a frozen society operating on vast inequality and limited social mobility. Although it is still a potential threat, eradicating infected rodents and having effective antibiotics has kept this disease at bay.
- 2. Smallpox, before Christ—With its exact origin unknown, this devastating disease dates back to the Egyptian empire around the third century B.C. Over the ensuing centuries it slowly spread globally by means of exploration, war, slave trade, expanding trade routes, and colonization. Smallpox significantly affected the European continent in the 10th to the 14th centuries, initially introduced by returning European warriors following an invasion of the Middle East. An epidemic in Paris in 1438 killed 50,000, mostly children. At the time Columbus reached the Americas in 1492, smallpox was endemic to Europe. Disease pathogens Europeans brought with them to the New World spread rapidly among the Native Americans, who had no immunity to hepatitis, influenza, typhus, typhoid, diphtheria, measles, mumps, and smallpox-the most deadly to that group of people being smallpox. Records suggest that over two generations, 10 to 100 million natives died as a result. This highly infectious and deadly disease was eventually eradicated thanks to effective vaccination efforts initiated originally by Edward Jenner in 1796.
- 3. The Spanish Flu, 1918—This 20th-century pandemic, caused by a particularly deadly pathogen, infected 500 million people worldwide. Since Spain was hit particularly hard, the disease has historically been known as the Spanish flu, though it originated elsewhere. Records suggest that the disease influenced the outcome of World War I by killing up to 40 percent of servicemen and servicewomen and destroying the medical treatment structure. Flu vaccines began to be introduced in the 1940s and are now widely available, offering a measure of protection against generalized seasonal flu outbreaks.





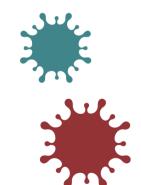


Invisible Enemies









HIV/AIDS, 1980—It is believed that the virus had its origin in Africa early in the 20th century by crossing over from primates to humans. It didn't gain attention until the early 1980s, when several gay men demonstrated unusual cases of pneumonia and cancer. HIV is the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), which is responsible for destroying the body's protective immune system. It is caused by exposure to and the exchange of infected body fluids. There is no cure or vaccine, and treatment is variable and expensive. Since 1981, upwards of 20 million people have died of the disease. An aura of social stigmatization often surrounds those infected.

NEW THREAT

Historical records starting as early as 400 B.C. indicate that humanity has suffered through approximately 200 severe epidemic and pandemic disease outbreaks. Of course, this list does not include the wide variety of diseases and illnesses that plague the daily lives of humanity on a more localized and smaller scale, such as colds, seasonal flu, infections, cancers, and lifestyle-related health issues. With growing populations, cities becoming larger and denser, and easy access to intercontinental travel, the potential for the effective spread of disease pathogens across land boundaries has alarmingly increased as well. Fortunately, not every outbreak becomes a pandemic, as has the current novel coronavirus.

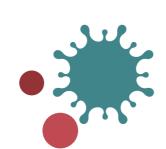
The World Health Organization designated this virus as COVID-19, the name being an acronym that stands for **co**rona**vi**rus **d**isease of 20**19**. Humans and animals alike can experience coronaviruses. In animals, symptoms include respiratory, gastrointestinal, liver, and neurologic diseases. In humans, coronaviruses can cause symptoms of the common cold or several varieties of more severe lung infections.

"Novel" indicates that it is a new coronavirus that has not been previously associated with humans. It also is identified as a zoonotic disease—one that begins in animals and is transmitted from animals to people.

MORE ABOUT COVID-19

- 1. It is a new disease. There is no approved vaccine yet. Since it is a virus, antibiotics are ineffective.
- 2. It affects primarily the lungs.
- 3. Symptoms can show up from two to 14 days after exposure.
- Exposure includes being close enough to an infected person to breathe in aerosol droplets from their coughing or sneezing. Touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, mouth, or nose is another way of becoming exposed.
- 5. Infection can be spread by someone who shows no symptoms but has the virus.
- Symptoms include fever, dry cough, runny nose, body aches, headache, fatigue, and/or diarrhea. Severe symptoms include difficulty breathing, confusion, and blue lips indicating medical intervention is needed.
- Anyone at any age can become seriously ill; however, most vulnerable individuals include those over 60 and those with chronic health problems or weakened immune conditions.
- 8. If you have symptoms, stay home and keep separate from family members and pets. Cover your cough and sneezes. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. Call your doctor for a possible evaluation, including testing. For severe symptoms as listed above, proceed to a local hospital emergency department. It's best to call first in the event another area is designated as a special entry point for possible coronavirus clients.







- 9. Effective personal defense habits include living a healthy lifestyle, including sufficient sleep; eating a nutritious diet; using ample water for cleansing and drinking; getting regular exercise, sunshine, and fresh air; washing hands frequently; and following instructions such as staying home, observing social distancing, and wearing a mask in public areas.
- Scientists are currently testing a number of drugs and drug combinations, striving to find an effective vaccine and treatment for COVID-19. Beware of scam treatment offers.
- 11. Even though it can be frightening to frequently hear of the thousands of people worldwide who have died of this new disease, be aware that many, many thousands had the sickness and have recovered. Nevertheless, diligently and responsibly follow safety precaution protocols to ensure the best outcome for you and those around you.

HOPE

COVID-19 is another tragic event for our world cleverly crafted and instigated by the unseen enemy of souls. Before the outbreak is over, it will have affected all people everywhere to one extent or another. But we need not despair. Our faith is anchored in a loving, promise-keeping God who can bring tremendous good out of tremendous bad. He reminds us in our times of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear to take courage and keep faith strong. Sing, pray, study, be thankful, and generously share hope and love. Above all, keep your eves looking upward. He's coming soon. Hallelujah!

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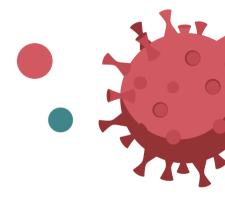
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Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years. She enjoys music, creative arts, cooking, and reading. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33, NIV







WHAT IS YOUR

MAKE SURE YOUR ANSWER IS BASED ON WHAT REALLY MATTERS.

"YOU ARE BEING DEMOTED. Your job has been given to someone else." My supervisor spoke casually, as if he had just thrown out tomorrow's weather forecast.

I sat in my chair, too petrified to move and not able to think clearly. I was being rejected and tossed aside. All my efforts to work hard and earn a place in the Christian institution where I was employed were not appreciated.



I had prided myself on being an excellent worker. I had been promoted before and always had outstanding recommendations by my supervisors. But this demotion made me realize something: doing well and being appreciated at my job had become a part of my self-worth.

Adding to the stress of my demotion, my husband was going through a similar situation at his place of work. It seemed that no matter what he did, he could not please his supervisor. A couple of months later, a bigger challenge came our way—he was laid off. In our family my husband has always been the dominant breadwinner because I prefer flexible jobs so I can take care of our small children.

I still remember the taste of fear. We were in a race against time to find a job before severance pay ran out. For the first time in 12 years, our church organization had let us down. We felt rejected and abandoned. Out of the flock, you might say.

Blame, guilt, anger, sadness, and grief were a constant presence. But God never left us!

During that time, I watched the thought-provoking movie *Overcomer*. One of the characters, a convalescent man, asked the coach, "Who are you?"

I sat in my chair, too petrified to move.

In my mind, I also went through a list: I'm a woman, a wife and a mother, a school counselor, a sister and a daughter. But, wait. Do I see myself as a daughter of God? If everything was taken away from me, how would I see myself? Does a job define who I am? Does my family define who I am? Do I have value as a person even when mistreatment, sickness, or other challenges come my way?

HARD QUESTIONS

Recently I sat down and made a list of all the blessings my husband and I have experienced since that day we both suffered job disappointments. Here is a summary: My husband received severance and unemployment benefits. Our church paid for our children's schooling in its entirety so they could remain in their Christian school. I took a job that held us over financially until my husband found a job five months later.

My husband's new job was clear across the country, another challenge in itself. Not my first choice, but God worked in me to accept moving again. Furthermore, we were never late on our bills, and we had enough money to move.

My husband became an Air Force reservist, which resulted in several financial blessings. God took care of us on our trip across the country. He provided financial aid for our kids to attend Christian education through a new and wonderful church family. We have also met some great people who are becoming dear friends. Is everything solved? No, but I can't deny the power of God and the miracles He has sent our way. I'm on the job hunt right now, and I'm constantly praying about it. My husband, a hospital chaplain, is also currently training to be a military chaplain. He is again having to learn that self-worth comes from God and not from humans. As Christians, we answer to a Higher Power, one who is loving, merciful, and forgiving.

What we do—our job—is a gift from God on this earth. But if you think about it, most of our jobs will be obsolete in the New Earth, so who are we going to be?

Let me ask again. Who are you? Do you base your self-worth on your looks, on money, on a physical ability, or on your musical talents? What would happen if you became paralyzed? Would you still praise God and live for Him?

Are you joyful to be persecuted because you are a Christian? Is your identity wrapped in Christ alone?

These are important questions. Our survival as Christians depends on knowing we belong to Christ and that we have the utmost value to Him. Therefore, we can trust Him and have peace against all odds. Psalm 118:6 says, "The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (NIV).

If you feel lost or battle low self-worth, take courage. God will never discard you. He loves you and has plans for your life. Lean on Him for strength, and He will direct your path.

Libna Arroyo is married to a hospital and Air Force chaplain. She has two beautiful children who keep her busy. She also loves being a school counselor and is pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology. Libna enjoys doing seminars about family and parenting, and she currently lives in California.

FAITH MUSCLES

ARE YOU READY TO EXERCISE YOURS?

JESUS PREDICTED FAITH would be in short supply at the end of time. He asked this probing question: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)....

Scripture contains one entire chapter devoted to faith. It's Hebrews 11. This chapter clarifies some of life's deepest issues. It answers some of life's most fundamental questions. It cuts to the heart of how to live our lives. Here God lists the heroes of faith down through the ages people whose names hang high in heaven's hall of fame.

Verse 1 of this chapter serves as an introduction to what follows. It defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the "substance . . ." Sub means "under." We have words like "submarine" ("under the sea") and "subterranean" ("under the earth"). Literally, a "substance" is something that "stands under." It is the essence of a thing—what it is. It supports or sustains something. It is a foundation.

So, faith is the quality that supports us when all of life falls apart. Faith stands under everything else. Faith sustains us in the perplexing questions of life. It is the essence of the spiritual life; it is what keeps it from crumbling.

However, biblical faith produces some surprising results. On the surface, it's rather confusing—a casual look at Hebrews 11 will leave you with more questions than answers. Follow me as we take a brief journey through this chapter:

- Verse 4: Abel's faith is so strong that it gets him killed. If he didn't have faith, he would have lived.
- Verse 5: Enoch's faith takes him to a place where he will never die. If he didn't have faith, he would have died.
- Verse 7: Noah's faith leads him to stay put for 120 years and build an ark. Noah obeys God and fulfills his God-given task.
- Verse 8: Abraham's faith leads him to go away where God directs him. Abraham obeys God and leaves home.
- Verse 22: Joseph's faith leads him to remain in Egypt, and God entrusts him with unusual wealth.
- Verses 24-27: Moses' faith leads him to leave Egypt and live in poverty in the wilderness.
- Verse 30: By faith the walls of Jericho fall down and the Israelites preserve their lives in battle.
- Verse 32: By faith mighty Samson brings walls down and loses his life.
- Verses 34, 35: By faith God's people are protected and miraculously delivered from death by the sword.
- Verses 36, 37: By faith God's people hang on despite persecution and are killed by the sword.

Do you catch what's going on here? The contrasts leap off the pages of this classic chapter on faith. By faith Abel dies and Enoch lives. By faith Noah stays and Abraham goes. By faith Joseph remains in Egypt and becomes rich and Moses leaves Egypt and becomes poor. By faith some are delivered from the sword and others are slain by it.

What is the common thread? In each instance, it is faith—trusting God enough to believe His promises and do just what He says. The heroes in God's hall of fame had different experiences, but they all trusted God. They trusted Him in life and in death. They trusted Him when He commanded them to stay and when He commanded them to go. They trusted Him when they lived in poverty and when they rejoiced in wealth. They trusted Him in sorrow and in joy....

What difference does faith make in our lives? "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). Faith is not simply belief or mental assent; it is something we live by.

FAITH AS RELATIONSHIP

Faith is a relationship with God as with a wellknown friend—a relationship that leads us to do whatever He asks and accepts whatever He allows to happen to us. Faith believes God will strengthen us to triumph over every difficulty and overcome every obstacle until the day we receive our final reward in His eternal kingdom.

Faith energizes. It enlivens. It lifts our spirits. It encourages our hearts. It renews our hope. It lifts our vision.

Faith believes God's power and receives God's gifts before they are realized. To *receive* the gift and to *realize* the gift are two different things. To receive the gift is to accept it in advance, believing that God will give it if and when we need it. To realize it is to experience its actual presence. . . .

Faith is trusting God for strength in our weakness, wisdom in our ignorance, courage in our fear, peace in our anxiety, hope in our despair, guidance in our doubt, and joy in our sorrow.

Faith doesn't know defeat. It doesn't understand the word *impossible*. It is filled with courage.

People of faith trust God enough to act upon His Word, believing He'll give them the strength to do whatever He asks them to do. Faith is the key ingredient for end-time living.

What has God asked you to do? What journey of faith has He asked you to take? What pilgrimage has He asked you to make? Faith is trusting God on the journey—trusting that He is leading you through life. Faith is the quality that supports us when all of life falls apart.

Faith Muscles

WHERE CAN WE OBTAIN FAITH?

Faith always has a source. It isn't faith in oneself or faith in faith. It isn't some kind of hyped-up positive thinking. It isn't a self-centered ego trip. It is faith *in God*.

God is always the source of our faith. Faith is the gift He gives us as we trust in Him.

Moses' faith enabled him to endure because he saw Him who is invisible (see Hebrews 11:27). How do you see something that is invisible? You must see it by faith.

Faith grasps the reality of God's presence. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a humble, godly pastor, was thrown into prison during World War II. Allied planes raided the German city nearby, and the prison shook under the intense bombing. Of that time Pastor Bonhoeffer wrote, "I sensed the presence of God." Awaiting death in a German prison camp, this godly man sensed God's closeness by faith. He had learned to trust God with his life.

What journey of faith has God asked you to take?

To understand faith fully, we must also understand what faith is not. Faith is not sight. The apostle Paul stated it eloquently when he said, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). If you can see the answer to your prayers before you pray, you don't need faith.

When you've prayed for the \$500 you need to pay your bills this month, it's much easier to sing God's praises after you receive the money than before. It is far easier to thank God for healing you of cancer than to trust Him when you are going through chemotherapy. It isn't difficult to be joyful when your marriage problems are solved. It is much more difficult to trust when you are going through them. Faith trusts God before the problem is solved. It sees beyond the difficulties and challenges of life to a loving God who will work them out in His way and in His time. Faith isn't sight, nor is it understanding. A very dear friend of my wife and me, Sandy Wyman Johnson, shared this powerful scriptural insight with me. Sandy's son Trevor died in childhood after a lengthy battle with leukemia. Trevor was a delightful child whose faith encouraged his mom greatly. When we were talking about Trevor's death one day, Sandy quoted Philippians 4:7, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." She then made this telling observation: "Mark, when your mind does not understand, you still can trust."

Sandy is right. You don't have to understand everything God is doing in order to trust that what He is doing is right. God's ways are far beyond my understanding. Faith is trusting that God knows what He is doing when I don't.

Faith isn't sight. It isn't understanding. And it isn't selfishness disguised as belief. Faith doesn't focus on what I want; it focuses on what God wants. Jesus illustrated faith at its best when He prayed in Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). Faith always seeks the Father's will....

We can become so absorbed in what we want God to do for us that we fail to receive what He wants to give us. Faith isn't believing that because I prayed, the sun will shine today so I can take my family to the beach. Faith is trusting that whether or not it shines, God is going to give me a wonderful day. Faith isn't believing that God must heal me when I demand Him to. It is committing my life to bring glory to God no matter what happens in my life. Faith is always directed to God. It is God-centered.

Have you ever wondered what to do when your faith is small? Have you wished you had a great deal more faith? I have good news for you. You have more faith than you realize. The problem isn't that you don't have faith. The problem is that you haven't exercised the faith you have. The apostle Paul speaks of God having "dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). When you accepted Jesus, God placed a measure of faith within your heart. And when you exercise the faith that God has given you, your faith grows. Ellen White, one of my favorite authors, said, "Your faith must not let go of the promises of God, if you do not see or feel the immediate answer to your prayers. Be not afraid to trust God."¹

HER HUSBAND'S KILLERS

One of the past century's most amazing stories of faith is the story of Elisabeth Elliot. Elisabeth's husband, Jim, was speared to death by Auca Indians on January 8, 1956, on the Curaray River in Ecuador. Some considered the Aucas to be the most savage tribe on earth. Jim was part of a mission group that wanted to teach this primitive tribe about the God who loves us. Along with four others, he made repeated attempts to contact them.

To assure the Aucas of their goodwill, the mission group flew over their village and dropped gifts from the air. All seemed to be going well. The barriers seemed to be breaking down. The missionaries felt it was safe to approach them. They landed their small plane on a narrow sandbar by the river and set up base camp. Every day for several days they radioed their wives at a mission station to report their progress. Then there was silence. The men no longer made the radio calls that their wives expected. For several days of uncertainty, these five women and their children waited to find out what had happened. Then the terrible truth was discovered.

During the time of uncertainty, Elisabeth Elliot wrote the following lines in a letter to her parents: "I want you to know that your prayers are being answered moment by moment as regards me—I am ever so conscious of the everlasting arms.... I have no idea what I will do if Jim is dead, but the Lord knows and I am at rest."

When word came out that all five were dead, the women and children gathered to comfort one another and to pray. One of the women went to the piano and began to play the song they had all sung together the morning the men left on their journey. "We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender, / We go not forth alone against the foe. / Strong in Thy Strength, safe in Thy keeping tender, / We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go."²

Elisabeth Elliot committed her life in faith to communicate to the Aucas the love of God and the life available through Christ. Within a few years, God had miraculously opened the door to reaching them, and this amazing woman of faith entered the Auca village and lived among them. She wrote, "Faith, to be worthy of the name, must embrace doubt. . . . Nothing less could have brought us to that place." God opened the door to one of the most savage tribes on earth.

Fast-forward. It is a sunny day in the Ecuadorian jungles. The sky is blue; the sun is bright on the lush landscape. Time has passed. The Aucas have accepted the gospel. One of their own has become an elder in the local church. Now he and another of the killers step into the river to baptize Steve and Kathy Saint. Years before, these men had speared their father to death on the banks of this same river. Now faith has triumphed. It has reached out and clasped the hand of God in crisis. It has become a channel through which God's power has reached the Aucas.

Would you like to open your heart to God and by faith receive His power today? Faith is trusting God as a friend well known. This is why faith is an indispensable part of end-time living. With God's gift of faith, you will survive and even thrive in life's difficulties today, tomorrow, and in the tumultuous days ahead.

¹ *Prayer*, p. 48. ² Lyrics by Edith Cherry.

Mark Finley and his wife, Ernestine "Teenie," have been involved in Christian ministry for over 40 years, preaching, teaching, offering spiritual growth workshops, and conducting over 100 evangelistic series that have spanned the globe with sermons translated into over 50 languages. Today, Pastor Finley and Teenie continue their ministry at the Living Hope School of Evangelism Training Center in Haymarket, Virginia. This article is excerpted from the book End-Time Living, published by Pacific Press and available at adventistbookcenter.com. Faith is the key ingredient for end-time living.

Kari Baulsen, **A FRIEND TO ALL**



"Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice." Proverbs 27:9, NIV

KARI PAULSEN ENTERED the unique life of a pastor's wife when she married her sweetheart, Jan, after their college days in Denmark.

The story goes that she was a bit confused in a complicated lecture on biblical dates, and Jan, sitting next to her, whispered, "Don't worry. I'll explain it to you later." It was the conversation spark that marked the beginning of a life of team service.

Kari was a complex woman, but deep within that complexity was a woman who simply and honestly loved and trusted her life to her God.

Kari was ever adaptable. She transitioned from seminary wife to pastor's wife to missionary wife to educator's wife to administrator's wife. (Jan served as General Conference president from 1999 to 2010.) She established their warm home over and over again in very different countries, cultures, environments, and assignments. And she did it methodically and without complaint.

Kari was a unique combination of team player and free spirit. She understood the expectations of the "church" and strived to meet those demands with positive attitudes and helpful ministries. She would comment that the benchmark is high for ministry wives. Still, she served the duty well within her own skin.

Her friendly and kindly spirit served her well. During her years in Africa, she contracted an illness that was her "thorn" throughout her life. That thorn was ever present and yet never self-empowered to be an excuse. She carried herself through difficult health passages with the freedom of knowing God had a purpose and she was there to be used by Him with her special gifts.

Kari had big ears and a little mouth. No, not physically (haha), but it was one of her greatest strengths. She patiently listened. Her keen perception heard beyond a person's words to listen for the inflections, the happiness, the pain, and the soul that were all bigger and more important than the words. She was discreet. She knew a lot and she held a lot. She was safe. Perhaps that was why we so trusted her.

Kari was compassionate. She was endowed with an extra allowance of empathy. It seemed her own life struggles translated into abundant empathy and caring for those who thought no one cared. In the times she was physically unable to personally have a chat, her phone became the instrument of reaching out. She initiated hundreds, thousands, of phone conversations to those who were struggling, hurting, feeling neglected, or without a friend. Those who were lacking in support found it in her confident and caring voice.

Kari was just so much fun. She loved stories. She loved hearing them and reminiscing about them. Her laugh was infectious. She loved mischief and could add a bit of wit and a humorous twist to fun conversations. The lilt in her voice still reverberates. Whether it was sneaking out for ice cream or sharing a funny, she was the one with whom to enjoy the moment's hilarity and recount the adventures!

Kari's friendship and association blessed my life. She was ever supportive, ever my friend. During our 12 years together, if it was at all possible, she joined with me to nurture the ministry wives—affirming one-on-one, giving a biblical devotional, a practical talk, a personal sharing of herself, or simply loving fellowship. Those were wearing but joyfully memorable years. We shared long days of travel to difficult locations, transportation cancellations and delays, and unaccommodating weather that changed more often than the clothing we carried, but through it all she was a good sport!

When we each transitioned from the General Conference, her caring and resilient attitude blossomed even greater. Gone were the days of face-to-face catch-ups; the trusty cell phone was our new connection. I miss her unique accent and voice: "Hello, Sharon? Kari here. And how are you today?"

On January 10, 2020, Kari left behind her earthly life to await her new one. Without a doubt Jesus will ensure that her new eternal life contains all that she enjoyed here and all that we loved and cherished about her, but it will be without the hurt, anxiety, personal tragedies, and physical pain and suffering she dutifully and valiantly endured.

Kari left behind a legacy of love for her God, a legacy of service to a world church, a legacy of care to her family, and a legacy of loyalty to those of us who were blessed to be her friend.

Sleep well, Kari, sleep well.

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Sharon Cress is a retired minister who served 18 years as an associate in the General Conference Ministerial Association. She and Kari worked together for 12 of those years.

CNY HODE

I FINALLY REALIZED THAT IT'S GOD'S STRENGTH, NOT OURS, THAT REALLY COUNTS.



"I have experienced quite a lot of illness, and this close proximity to death does something to you and your relationship with the Lord," Kari told *Ministry* magazine in 2006. "Somehow you rely more on Him. It's important to stay close to Him, to pray, to read. It's kind of a constant reminder that this life might not last that long."

A FEW YEARS BACK, I sat in meetings at the world church headquarters with some other spouses of church administrators. My energy was low that day, and the smile on my face probably owed more to determination than anything else.

The main speaker for the morning session was an energetic, talented lady who spoke at length about making the most of one's role as the spouse of a pastor. She described the many projects she coordinated and the initiatives she'd begun that complemented her husband's ministry.

I came home that afternoon feeling terribly inadequate. No matter who we are, or what public persona we project, I suspect at times we all sometimes feel confronted by a sense of our own limitations. Through the years, I've usually done a reasonable job of keeping these feelings in perspective. Yet that day my contributions to the Lord's cause felt rather pitiful.

Later that evening, I opened my Bible. At the time I was reading through some passages in Psalms, and I came to a few lines in Psalm 147 that stopped me in my tracks. I read: "His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love" (Psalm 147:10, 11, NIV).

Since that day, I've kept a copy of these words on a slip of paper in the back of my Bible. It reminds me that one of the hardest parts of being a Christian is grasping the fact that it's *God's* strength, not ours, that really counts.

In our humanness, we say to God, "Look what I can give You, Lord!" And He says, "It's really not about your gifts; what matters is that you accept *My* gift of grace."

How radically our perspective can be changed by this simple, yet hard-to-absorb fact. Suddenly, we don't need to use our "spiritual output" as a measuring stick for self-worth. The God we serve takes pleasure, instead, when we recognize our own weakness and place our "hope in his unfailing love."

Kari Paulsen ministered to the church she loved for almost 60 years. While her husband, Jan, the former president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, traversed a more public path, Kari's role was most often behind the scenes. With her trademark warmth, wisdom, and humor, she worked alongside her husband in Africa, Europe, and the United States. Kari's determination to follow God's leading led to a life of adventure she'd never have foreseen. This article is exerpted from Kari's book Against All Odds, available at adventistbookcenter.com.

FAMILY MATTERS



WE IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLD imagine the agonizing death of Jesus on the cross. Crucifixion was death by asphyxiation, as the torn and beaten arms worked to lift the weight of the body to enable each excruciating breath. As I write, many people are fighting their own battle to breathe, as coronavirus ravages their lungs. I don't know what the world will look like when this is over, but nearly everyone will know someone who has died during this global pandemic.

This is a tough reality for us, our children, and the elderly and vulnerable. It's even tougher when we're not prepared for it. It's healthy for families to talk about death together, both before and after it happens, in order to process their thoughts and feelings. Here are some ways to do that.

TALKING WITH CHILDREN

Use a natural springboard to talk about death, such as when a pet dies, when you find a dead creature on a walk, or when someone you know dies. You can ask your child what death means to them, because they will often have some ideas of their own. This helps you to check any misconceptions. Share what death means to you and what you believe about death.

Many Bible stories include death and grief, but we often glide over them rather than explore the important issues with our children. This can inhibit us from being honest about the pain of loss and the natural sadness and grief we feel when someone dies. With your children, wonder how the families of the people who died in the Bible might have felt. And wonder together how they might have comforted each other.

Some children's books can help you to explore the experience of what happens when someone dies. *I Miss Grandpa* is a book I wrote for Adventist children to help them understand death and resurrection. It also includes some practical ideas for helping children with their grief.

Use straightforward language when talking about death. When we say we've "lost" someone, children think they'll be found again. The term "passed away" makes no sense to children, and even saying that someone has "fallen asleep" can make children feel frightened to sleep in case they die too.

WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW

- When someone dies, they are no longer breathing and living, and we won't be able to talk to them and see them again.
- When someone dies, it makes us feel very sad because we loved them so much.
- We will miss them for a very long time, and it is normal to feel sad about that and to cry.
- In between crying for the person we can't see and talk to anymore, we can still laugh together and enjoy the good things of life.
- There will be a funeral, which is a service in which family and friends come and say goodbye and honor the person.
- Their body will be put safely in a wooden box, like a treasure.
- The box is buried in the ground, or sometimes it is burned. Either way, the body becomes like dust. But that doesn't matter because God can bring anyone back to life again.
- Jesus was brought back to life after He died, and He was taken up to heaven to live with His Father.
- One day Jesus will come again. He will bring those who loved Him and who loved other people back to life. He will take them to heaven to live with Him forever.

If your children ask questions about death, answer them as honestly and simply as you can. It's OK not to have all the answers, and it's OK not to tell them everything. But don't lie to them.

TALKING WITH A SPOUSE

Yesterday (as I write this) nearly 1,000 people in the United Kingdom died from the coronavirus. Many of them died in intensive care units without any relatives and friends to hold their hand. So my husband and I talked about dying alone in the hospital. Although we would want to be together if one of us was dying, we both understood that this would not be possible during the pandemic. I told Bernie that no one must ever feel guilty for not being there if I had to die alone. As long as I was able to, I would think about those I love, and that would comfort me. Even before the pandemic, we had told each other about our wishes for organ donation, resuscitation options, and where we would prefer to die (at home, in the hospital, or in a hospice). We have also given each other permission to remarry if one of us dies so that neither of us needs to feel guilty if that's the choice we make.

TALKING ABOUT FUNERALS

This year we had a family funeral for an elderly relative. As we planned the service, we realized none of us knew his favorite hymns or which passage of Scripture he would have chosen. We weren't clear about all of his life story or what his wishes would be about the service.

My adult daughter was listening to the discussions. Later she asked me what kind of funeral service I would like. It wasn't a sad conversation at all. I told her the songs I would like and my favorite chapters in the Bible. I followed up by sending her an email with all the information in one place, and I attached the story of my life that I had written for a project. If it's too difficult to talk about funeral plans many years in advance, write your wishes in a letter that your family members can open at the appropriate time.

Wherever possible, let children come to the funerals and burials of those they love. Ask for a service outline in advance and explain everything that will happen so there are no surprises. Some children might like to read a Bible verse or share music, but give them the option to let someone else do it if they decide they don't want to at the last minute. Some children might like to gather flowers for the coffin or write a letter or poem for the person who has died.

GOD CARES

If it feels too scary to talk about death, pray about your concerns and ask yourself why you find it so hard. Because of sin, death is a natural part of life and being human. God cares about every aspect of our lives. He remembers that He made us out of dust and that we are fragile (Psalm 103:13-18). His love for us is everlasting, in death as much as in life. And best of all, one day He will personally wipe away every tear of grief from our eyes (Revelation 21:4).

Karen Holford is a family therapist who has spent time working in hospice. She is currently the family ministries director of the Trans-European Division. DEAR DEBORAH

Dear Deborah,

Upon moving to our new church a few months ago, I requested to not hold any church positions for a year in order to become more familiar with the church needs and have a settling time for our children. I love to serve and have been blessed with great gifts from the Lord. I just wanted a little breathing time.

Thankfully, everyone seemed OK with my request. However, my husband recently overheard a few women discussing my lack of "involvement" in the church.

I was encouraged with the initial support from the members to honor my request, but now I'm uncomfortable. The desire to please others is fighting its way to the front, and feelings of guilt are flooding my thoughts. Please help me determine what is the right thing to do.

Sincerely, Feeling Pressured

Dear Feeling Pressured,

The temptation to jump right in at every invitation to serve can be overwhelming. Your request is not uncommon, and your concerns are valid. Thankfully, a few solutions can make the awkwardness a bit easier.

Keep in mind that your new church family is undoubtedly happy to have you and eager to assimilate you into various church activities. However, this can be achieved without you becoming a ministry leader for the specific time you requested.

One option is to visit church members with your husband and say something like, "Gifts and passions among pastors' wives differ greatly, but one that is shared is ministry to our husbands. Please forgive my previous oversight in not sharing how important that is to me. Before you know it, our connection together as a church family will grow and strengthen, which will prepare me to know the perfect ministry fit for me."

As you share your enthusiasm for assisting and supporting your husband, you are sure to gain respect and admiration for your commitment—ultimately providing a win-win situation for the entire church body. One of the most important and valued ministry roles you can fill is that of ministry to your spouse and family. This is no small task and should be carefully guarded and nurtured.

In addition, engaging in women's Bible study groups or helping out in ministry opportunities of interest will foster beneficial interactions. Inevitably, this will provide much-needed time to process where you want to serve.

Another option during the transitioning phase is inviting others over for fellowship and potluck snacks. This will create a fun environment in which to get acquainted with your new church family and let them see your interest in them.

As you pray and seek God's wisdom, claim Bible promises and trust that He is working in and through you to be a blessing to your spouse, children, and church family. "Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established" (Proverbs 16:3).

Prayerfully, Deborah

Let us be hopeful and courageous. Despondency in God's service is sinful and unreasonable. He knows our every necessity. To the omnipotence of the King of kings our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of the tender shepherd. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to all who trust in Him. He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be sustained. His love is as far above all other love as the heavens are above the earth. He watches over His children with a love that is measureless and everlasting.

-The Ministry of Healing, p. 481

Special UOLES

> that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us "exceeding abundantly," "according to the riches of His glory," and "the working of His mighty power." Ephesians 3:20, 16; 1:19.

Not because we see or feel

—The Desire of Ages, p. 200

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day.

He is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the help they need. He will give them the wisdom which their varied necessities demand.

Said the tried apostle Paul: "He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

-The Ministry of Healing, p. 482

KIDS

GVD CARES FOR YOU

SOMETIMES LIFE IS difficult, and we can feel worried and afraid about many things. God cares about all our worries and fears. He tells us to trust Him with all the things that trouble us (1 Peter 5:7).



Draw around an adult's hand on a piece of paper. Cut out the shape. Then write all your worries and fears on the hand. Pray about the things you have written on the hand and put them all into God's hands, because He cares for you. Sometimes there is nothing much we can do to make things better. But God is more than able and willing to take care of our problems and comfort our hearts.

CALMING PROMISES-----

The Bible is filled with verses that can help us trust in God and feel calm again. Look up the verses and choose your favorites. Make a small book by folding plain paper in half and stapling or stitching the pages together along the fold line. Write your favorite calming verses in the book and decorate each page. Make more little promise books to mail to friends and family far away or to give to people who are going through hard times.

I

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Joshua 1:9
- Psalm 23:4
- Psalm 46:10
- Isaiah 40:31
- Isaiah 41:10
- Zephaniah 3:17
- Matthew 11:28-30
- John 14:27
- Romans 8:38, 39
- Philippians 4:6, 7
- 2 Thessalonians 3:16
- 1 Peter 5:7



CALMING STORIES

Ask some of the grown-ups around you how their faith has helped them in tough times. What do they do that calms their heart and reminds them that God is with them? Collect their stories and find a way to share them with others. How did listening to their stories inspire you and help your family to find ways to manage your own tough times?



HAVE A HUG FROM GOD

God loves us so much! He notices every tear we cry, and He knows all about our worries. When you feel sad and anxious, ask your parent to wrap you up in a snug blanket and hold you against their chest. Then ask them to tell you that God loves you and He is giving you a big hug right now. Try to listen or feel for your parent's heartbeat and know that God's heart beats with love for you today. Being hugged calms us down and helps us to feel safe again. "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Next ask your parent to say a blessing over you, just as Jesus blessed the little children when He was on earth (Luke 18:15-

17). How does it feel to be blessed? What do you think it would have been like to have Jesus bless you? What do you think He would say to bless you if He were with you today?

What can you say to bless your parents? There are lots of blessings in the Bible. Search for them at the end of the epistles and scattered throughout the Bible. There is a famous and beautiful blessing in Numbers 6:22-27.



BIRDS AND FLOWERS

Wherever we live, we can usually find a small flower or bird to inspire us. Read Matthew 6:25-33. Watch a bird and see how freely it flies and sings, without any worries. Find a flower and look at its simple beauty. See how beautifully God has dressed it. Read the verses again. Talk about the following questions in your family—you'll all have different answers, and that's OK!

- What do you like best about these verses?
- What is the most important message in these verses for you?
- What do these verses tell you about God's loving care?
- What else can we learn about God's care for us by looking at the flowers and birds?
- What other things in nature show you that God cares for you?



Make a care package to share with someone going through a hard time. Wrap up tiny gifts and treats and write a tag for each item with an encouraging promise on it. Match a verse about being washed whiter than snow with a little soap or shower gel. Wrap something heart-shaped and add a verse about love. Include a blank thank-you card so they can make a list of things they want to thank God for and attach a verse about gratitude. Use a concordance or search on the internet to find Bible verses to match the gifts. Make a label for the package, inviting your friend to open a treat every time they need to feel God's love. Include a copy of the "Father's Love Letter" from www.fathersloveletter.com. This letter is based on lots of Bible verses and is available in more than 50 different languages.

God Cares For You



JESUS PROTECTS HIS FRIENDS

Read the story of Jesus calming the storm. You can find the story in Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25. Act out the story with your family. Use a large piece of cloth, such as a sheet or tablecloth. Choose a blue cloth if you have one. For the boat, find an unbreakable toy boat, fold a paper boat, or cut a boat from cardboard. Place the boat in the center of the cloth and ask each person to hold onto the edges of the cloth. Retell the story in your own words. When the storm comes, ripple the cloth as hard as you can to make huge waves that toss the boat around. Then, when Jesus calms the storm, pull the cloth out as flat as possible to make the "water" still again. How does Jesus calm the storms in your life?



GOD CARES FOR YOUR FAMILY

Find a large gift bag or cover a box with paper like a present. Use sticky notes or stick squares of colored paper onto the bag or box with glue/ paste/tape. On each sticky note or piece of paper write one way in which God has taken care of your family during the past week. Remember, these are just the ways you've noticed. He has done far more to care for you than you'll ever know! Let the youngest person in the family hold the box as you pray and thank God for caring for each of you.



When your family is going through a hard time, or even when they aren't, you can fill your home with promises from God. Choose some Bible promises that encourage your family, write them out neatly, and decorate them. Then place them in the kitchen, by the front door, in the bedrooms, in the bathroom, and maybe even in the car! These will remind you of God's loving care and protection many times a day. Here are some suggestions:

- Kitchen/eating area—Matthew 6:25, 26
- Lounge/living room—Numbers 6:24-26
- Bathroom—Psalm 51:7
- Bedroom—Psalm 4:8
- Front door—Luke 10:5
- Car/garage—Deuteronomy 31:6

What other verses can you find that suit the rooms and places in your home?

Karen Holford is the family ministries director of the Trans-European Division. She loves to look for all the ways God cares for her each day!

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

East-Central Africa Division

In December 2019 the Southern Tanzania Union Mission and Northern Tanzania Union Conference held a graduation for 650 ministerial spouses (formerly called Shepherdesses). Pastors were there to witness their wives graduate, and 30 pastors were also ordained. Both the pastors and their spouses enjoyed seminars and were blessed by the presence of Jerry Page and Audrey Folkenberg.



Ministerial spouses in Tanzania had a graduation ceremony.

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Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

In February 2020 a GC Summit was held in Cape Town, South Africa. Ministerial spouses from Cape Conference enjoyed meetings with Nancy Wilson as the featured speaker. Thandi Papu, who serves as the ministerial spouse sponsor for the conference, invites prayers for this group of pastors' spouses.



Ministerial couples in Swaziland met for a prayer conference in Mbabane.



Ministerial spouses in Lesotho gathered in Maseru for a ministerial couples meeting focused on prayer and spiritual leadership.



Ministerial spouses in Cape Town enjoyed fellowship with Nancy Wilson.



Nancy Wilson, GC ministerial spouse sponsor, posed with her sister in Christ, Thandi Papu, ministerial spouse sponsor for Cape Town.



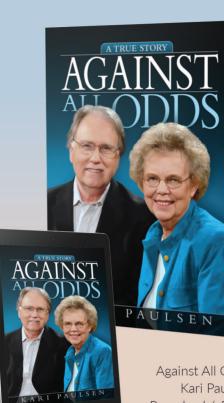
Ministerial spouses from the Indian Ocean area in Africa met in Mauritius for a prayer conference and ministerial couples council.

A Memoir from Kari Paulsen

"With her customary honesty and wit, Kari Paulsen tells a moving story of resilience born out of deep personal faith. This warm and candid spiritual memoir will be read—and loved—by thousands of believers around the globe who are trying to understand the leading of God in their own stories of pain and grace. The writing is as bright and engaging as the author, who skillfully weaves the incidents of an unusually difficult life narrative with compelling insights drawn from years of study and daily Christian experience. Don't miss this book, or the gift Kari Paulsen has given through it to the church she loves."

Bill Knott, editor, Adventist Review, Adventist World

ORDER TODAY www.AdventistBookCenter.com 800-765-6955



Against All Odds Kari Paulsen Paperback/eBook 9780816357741

When I think of Kari, I remember her keen sense of humor, her ready smile, and a slight twinkle in her eyes. She was cheerful despite her health problems, which she wrestled with for years. When she couldn't get out, she ministered from her home by either sending cards or making phone calls to encourage people. She will be missed, but there is a grand reunion that we are all looking forward to. May it come soon!

--Nancy Wilson is the wife and ministry partner of Ted N.C. Wilson, the General Conference president.

It's with sadness that I write this tribute to Kari Paulsen. What a sweet and gracious Christian lady! It was a privilege to get her phone calls or notes, especially knowing how busy she was providing support to so many people around the world. She inspired me with her gentle spirit in spite of so many health challenges. There was always a sweet smile on her face whenever she greeted anyone. What a joy to work with her in providing support to pastors' spouses. I pray that her legacy carries on inspiring spouses everywhere.

-Shelly Lowe is senior editorial assistant for Shepherdess International.

In 2014 Kari asked me to read her book Against All Odds before it went to press and give my suggestions and endorsement. I want to share some of my comments: "What a powerful and moving book! I laughed and cried. Kari's story gives profound advice and courage for dealing with minor or major struggles that life throws our way. It gives the courage to stand for what is right. It gives the insight to understand people of all cultures. My prayer is that everyone will read it. It will be such a blessing to your life!"

—Janet Page is associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer.