

THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

Vol. 37 | Issue Three 2020

MOVED BY
COMPASSION





ON THE COVER

In numerous places in the Bible, we are told: "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion" (Psalm 145:8). And repeatedly the gospel writers talk of Jesus being "moved by compassion" for the people around Him, prompting Him to feed them, heal them, and teach them about the beauty of His kingdom. In Matthew 25 He outlined important aspects of compassion in His talk about the sheep and the goats; the articles in this issue show ways we can practice that compassion. After all, Jesus asks us, His followers, to also be moved by compassion.



| ARTICLES

- 08 WHERE'S MY CHURCH?**
Learn about a church no one knew about—and another they couldn't live without.
Don Jacobsen
- 10 WATER OF LIFE**
The young boy needed drinking water, and the woman needed the water of life.
Lori Peckham
- 12 "I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE"**
As her hand reached for mine, I knew my purpose.
Arthur A. Milward
- 14 SLAVE GIRL**
When someone mistreats you, do you respond this way?
Trudy J. Morgan-Cole
- 16 THE WEDDING DRESS**
Surely this was too much for God to ask of me.
Barbara Frye Anderson
- 20 PRAYER AT THE PRISON**
Jesus knows all too well what it feels like to be a prisoner.
Mic Henton
- 26 SMELLS LIKE SALVATION**
Would I pay the price to rescue this creature?
Lee R. Tripp

| FEATURES

- 03 EDITORIAL**
The Good Bye
- 04 FAMILY MATTERS**
Homegrown Compassion
- 07 TIPS TO THRIVE**
My Favorite Minister's Wife
- 19 SPECIAL QUOTES**
- 22 LIFESTYLE**
The Tipping Point
- 25 GETTING REAL**
Weddings and Jesus' Return
- 28 KIDS**
Be Fruitful!
- 31 DEAR DEBORAH**
"My Compassion Meter Is Running Low"

BIBLE CREDITS:

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture passages are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scriptures credited to NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

PHOTO CREDITS: dreamstime.com, freepik, unsplash.com



MINISTERIAL SPOUSES
ASSOCIATION

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

MINISTRY TO PASTORAL SPOUSES AND FAMILIES DIVISION COORDINATORS:

East-Central Africa: Winfrida Mitekaro
Euro-Africa: Elvira Wanitschek
Euro-Asia: Alla Alekseenko
Inter-American: Cecilia Iglesias
North American: Desiree Bryant
Northern Asia-Pacific: Lisa Clouzet
South American: Marli Peyerl
South Pacific: Pamela Townend
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean: Margret Mulambo
Southern Asia: Sofia Wilson
Southern Asia-Pacific: Helen Gulfan
Trans-European: Patrick Johnson
West-Central Africa: Sarah Opoku-Boateng

EDITORIAL OFFICE:

12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600
Phone: 301-680-6513
Fax: 301-680-6502
Email: lowes@gc.adventist.org

Executive Editor: Janet Page
Assistant Editor: Lori Peckham
Senior Editorial Assistant: Shelly Lowe
Copy Editor: Becky Scoggins
Contributing Editors: Beth Thomas and Jasmin Stankovic
Layout & Design: Erika Miike

Printed in the U.S.A.
ministerial.adventist.org/spouses

The Good Bye

READ A
SMELLY STORY
OF MY DAD'S
COMPASSION
ON PAGE 26!

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I flew to California to visit my parents. My father, Lee Tripp, pastored in the Central California Conference for 20 years and at that time was pastor of the Sonora SDA Church.

Our visit went quickly, and soon my dad was driving me back to the San Francisco Airport for my return flight to Maryland. On the way we hit fog, which caused a traffic pileup. Nervously I looked at my watch. "Do you think I'll make my flight?" I asked him.

"I hope so," he replied, shaking his head.

About two hours later Dad drove up to the curb beside the "United Departure Gates" sign. "I'd better drop you off," he said. "I'll park the car."

He turned to my mom. "Why don't you go with Lori? I'll meet you both inside."

"OK," I replied sadly.

Dad quickly unloaded my bags, and Mom and I grabbed them and hurried inside. When we got to the security checkpoint, I longingly scanned the airport for my father. "I have to go," I told my mom with a sigh. She nodded, and we hugged each other. "Tell Dad bye," I called behind me.

When I arrived at my gate, the airline agent had already called final boarding. I dashed in and found my seat. Within minutes the flight attendant latched the door and announced our departure.

As I looked out the window, warm tears filled my eyes. I hadn't had the chance to hug my father goodbye and feel his strong arms surround me. As always, he had prayed for me before we headed

out the door to the airport, but now I missed his final words of love and care, his blessing on me.

Suddenly the flight attendant's voice over the intercom caught my attention. "Passenger Peckham, passenger Lori Peckham, your father is at the airport counter and says goodbye and that he loves you."

Now I really started to cry! But I also smiled. My compassionate father didn't want me to leave without hearing his goodbye and assurance of love.

How like our heavenly Father! He sent His Son with a message of unbelievable love and compassion. And I think He wants us to hear and cherish His message to us: "I can't tell you this face-to-face right now, but I love you and can't wait until we're together again."

He promised, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2, 3). That's our blessing and our hope. ■

Lori Peckham is grateful to have grown up as a pastor's kid (PK). She now teaches English and communication at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she lives on a small lake with her husband, Kim, and teenage son, Reef. Her father recently went to sleep in Jesus at the age of 91, and she can't wait for their reunion in heaven!





HOMEGROWN COMPASSION

THE WORLD NEEDS COMPASSION, AND IT BEGINS RIGHT WHERE YOU LIVE.

EARLY IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC I listened to some leading experts in medicine, economics, politics, and education. Each of them projected what life might be like by June 2021. The picture was vague and washed with shades of gloom, but tiny glimmers of hope still sparkled here and there.

Their conclusion really caught my attention. They pointed out that when life settles back into some kind of new normality, the test of our society will be how compassionate and supportive we have become toward those who are now poor, weak, bereaved, homeless, jobless, and more vulnerable than ever before.

Jesus is our ultimate example of compassion. His eyes noticed the people on the edges of the community and marketplaces, such as tax collectors, tired mothers, people who were rejected and distressed, and people with leprosy, paralysis, and blindness.

He didn't blame them for their problems or tell Himself that it wasn't His responsibility to help them. He was moved with compassion for those who were vulnerable and hurting and who needed His love, acceptance, encouragement, hope, and help. His compassion didn't just stay in His heart as a warm, fuzzy feeling—He acted on that love and gave others just what they needed: healing, forgiveness, respect, value, food, and protection from danger.

FAMILY FIRST

The best place to develop our Christ-like compassion is in our own homes. When we practice compassion in our marriages and families, our “compassion muscles” grow ready for action. God calls us

Jesus didn't blame people for their problems.

to care for our families first, because our closest relationships are always our greatest responsibility. Husbands and wives are called to cherish each other, and parents are called to cherish their children. When everyone in the family has been cherished and cared for, then we are ready to care for those outside the home (1 Timothy 3:4, 5).

Before we can show compassion to others, we must first experience God's loving compassion for us and our loving compassion for each other. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). The more love we pour into our spouse's heart, the more love is likely to flow back to ours. If we want our children to grow compassionate hearts, we first need to show them compassion.

Read Psalm 103 and let the loving picture of God soak into your heart and mind. Encourage everyone in your family to do something kind for everyone else in the family every single day. Ask how you can help each other to experience a small taste of God's incredible love.

NEW EYES

The compassionate love that God showers on us also changes our perspective of others. We begin to see every person as a child of God, just like us. We are called to love and care for them the way that our Father God would want each of His beloved children to be loved. But compassionate eyes don't just see other people as God's children—they are constantly using their peripheral vision to notice the suffering of others, just as Jesus did.

Watch each person in your family. Look for any signs that they are struggling, sad, anxious, or distressed, and ask how you can help. Teach your children to notice other children who might be sad, hurt, or lonely. Role-play the skills of noticing when others need friendship and help, listening to what's bothering them, and caring for their needs.

COMPASSIONATE BELIEFS

Another important aspect of compassion is the belief that it's my responsibility to help those around me who are hurting. As soon as I think that it's not my problem, or that their suffering is in some way their own fault, my compassion evaporates, just as it did for the priest and the Levite in the story of the good Samaritan. True compassion believes that it doesn't matter who you are or why you are suffering. What matters is that another human being is hurting, and my responsibility as a fellow human being is to relieve that suffering, even if it's just by being there.

Nurturing compassion starts in the home. Developing your child's kindness and compassion helps them to grow more like Jesus, strengthens their character, and creates the foundation for greater resilience and happiness. Create worships based on stories of compassion in the Bible. Notice those who are compassionate and kind in your children's reading books and in the news. Help them to find compassionate heroes and role models.



*True
compassion
believes
that it
doesn't
matter who
you are or
why you are
suffering.*


COMPASSIONATE FEELINGS

In order to be compassionate, we need to imagine and understand how other people are feeling. It means entering into their emotional world—being sad with them when they are sad and happy when they are happy (Romans 12:15). We need to let our hearts be moved by their emotions so that we can respond in the most compassionate way.

Take time around the dinner table, or at bedtime, to listen to each other's stories of the day. When we regularly ask other family members about their daily challenges, the saddest moment, the greatest joys, and any time when they felt afraid, it becomes easier to talk about emotions together. It also means that we're regularly monitoring each other's emotional well-being so that we can help if someone is being bullied or slipping into depression.

COMPASSIONATE HANDS

Compassion is empty and useless unless it responds in wise, caring, and practical ways to the other person's needs. Jesus noticed that people were hungry and fed them. The good Samaritan cared for the injured man by cleaning his wounds, giving him water to drink, and taking him to a safe place. In Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25), the sheep are the ones who demonstrate their care for others by providing for their practical needs.

Pray together about developing a compassion ministry as a family. You can find lots of kindness ideas at ted.adventist.org/family-ministries/resources/ministerial-families/1543-live-kind. Regularly involve children in family acts of compassion, and listen to their suggestions for helping others. Look for stories of children and teens who have started compassion projects in their local towns, and inspire the families in your church to become families of compassion. 

***Karen Holford** is a family therapist and the family ministries director of the Trans-European Division. She is passionate about developing compassionate families and children.*



TIPS TO SURVIVE THRIVE



MY FAVORITE MINISTER'S WIFE

WHO IS MY FAVORITE minister's wife? My mother! She was always kind, loving, and compassionate, a dedicated daughter of God.

My mother was from the state of Wyoming, which was considered a "northern state" back in the 1930s. She longed to graduate from college, something not common among young women back then. But since she was determined, she worked her entire way through. Her parents, being very poor, sent her a dime every two weeks—that was all they could spare.

Upon graduating from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska (USA), she received a call to a different part of the country where she had never been. This would be a new culture for her, and at first she felt she wouldn't like it there. She was nervous about the far distance from her home and from all she'd ever known. But since she determined that she would be happy with her new challenge, she was.

She could have felt out of place, but she decided that she would love and accept the people and the changes she would be making. How did she do it?

1. **Prayer.** She prayed that the Lord would help her learn to like her new post. She decided she would work as though God were her boss. She asked God to give her a love for the job and the people.
2. **Determination.** She *had* to accept the call. She needed work (it was the only opportunity offered to her), so she approached it with an open mind and an open heart. (And she did learn to like the new location—she met her future husband there!)

3. **Flexibility.** She loved people for who they were, which is necessary for all of us to remember. It just might be that we are more alike than we realize—we can find good-hearted people all over the world.

4. **Sensitivity.** When we look for opportunities to learn about other people's ways and mentality, it might surprise us to find that some of "their ways" are even better than ours!

5. **Adaptability.** Probably one of the most important things to remember is to be *adaptable*. Jesus was certainly adaptable when He came to this earth (Philippians 2:5-8). May we learn from His example.

6. **Decision.** We can decide to be happy in our new circumstance. When strange new situations arise, we can determine to accept them and even rejoice in them (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

7. **Humility.** Let us never convey in word or action that we think ourselves superior or different. Humility and service are important, inside and outside our comfort zones.

May we remember that Jesus is with us always (Matthew 28:20), and His help is bountiful and free!

J

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



WHERE'S MY CHURCH?

RIGHT OUT OF SEMINARY I served a district of five churches along with another pastor. He was the senior and I was the intern, so I pretty much looked after the three small churches and he oversaw the two larger ones. I drove a lot of miles that year.

The first time I visited the smallest and most distant church was a memorable event. GPS didn't exist yet, so the senior pastor told me it was a nice building on the left as I entered the little town.

"Don't worry; you'll have no trouble finding it," he assured me.

But I did. I arrived early and began driving up and down the streets. Nothing. It was nearly time for service to begin, and I began to get a bit panicky. It would be my first introduction to the church, and I sure didn't want to be late.

I stopped at a gas station to check the phone book (remember those?), but of course the little church had no phone, so it had no entry in the phone book. Then I got a brilliant idea; I stopped by the police station and told them my plight. I said something like, "If there was a robbery reported at the Seventh-day Adventist Church, how long would it take you to get there?"

“I was hungry and you gave Me food.” Matthew 25:35

The helpful officer behind the desk said, “Son, we don’t even have a Seventh-day Adventist Church in this town.”

“Yes, you do,” I assured him. “I’m the pastor.”


So he volunteered to help me find it, and we piled into his patrol car. We didn’t drive around more than about five minutes when he got an idea. He made a U-turn, and a couple of blocks later pulled up in front of two huge fir trees. Sure enough, through the branches I could see the sign (misspelled): *Seveneth Day Adventist Church*. I almost wished we hadn’t found it.

ESSENTIAL?

Now, sixty years later, let me give you an update, also true. Another church in another place. As I write, we’re in the midst of the coronavirus tragedy, and most of the churches in our nation are functionally closed. So are many of the businesses, restaurants, hotels, etc. Most of the local decrees read something like, “Closed except for *essential agencies* such as police, fire, hospitals, grocery stores . . . and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” That’s what the announcement said!

I had to find out what that was about. Here’s what I learned. Everybody for miles around knows about that church; it’s seen as “essential.” It’s a powerhouse of deliverance. They take in drug addicts and pray them through withdrawal, provide temporary housing for the homeless, and feed scores every week. Like hospitals, grocery stores, and police, *the church is viewed by the city as an indispensable part of the community.*

This isn’t ancient history. Just yesterday morning a small group arrived about 7:00 a.m. and, keeping appropriate social distances, set up tables and a hundred empty boxes. An hour later they left and another small group arrived and began to fill the boxes with food. Cars pulled up, loaded up the boxes, and headed out for delivery. A hundred families had a lunch they likely wouldn’t have had otherwise.

Essential, indeed. I believe God is honored when His church isn’t hidden behind two huge fir trees . . . or anything else. 

***Don Jacobsen** is married to Ruthie, and the couple has two grown sons, two adult granddaughters, and six great-grandchildren. Don is a native of the Pacific Northwest and has served as an ordained clergy for more than 60 years. He is also an author and sought-after speaker, having spoken in most states through the U.S., across Canada, and in scores of international venues. This article originally appeared on the Hope Heals website.*



MARRIED TO A PASTOR?

Discover a safe place to fellowship, ask questions and learn from others on Facebook and Twitter!

DISCUSS SHARE CONNECT

Official groups for Ministry Spouses online:  [ministerialspouses](#)  [@ministryspouses](#)



Water of Life



PAUL SMART DROVE THROUGH the desert of Ethiopia. As country director of ADRA Ethiopia at the time, he was visiting some of his territory. He noted with sadness the emaciated cattle, the parched dirt with no trees, and the people who looked like skin and bones.

As he got out of his vehicle to enter a village, he greeted a small boy standing beside the path. The boy appeared to be about 9 years old. They said a few friendly words to each other, and then Paul asked him, "Would you like a drink of water?"

It was a simple offer—nothing that would excite most children. But Paul knew that this village was experiencing a severe famine with drastic water shortages.

"No. No thank you," the little boy replied respectfully. "Today is not my turn to drink water."

Paul was taken aback by this answer, but he knew exactly what it meant. In this drought-devastated area, children get a drink of water every second day—if they're lucky. The rest of the time they must live with the dryness in their mouth and their whole body. When they do get water to drink, it's often muddy. Most likely, it's also contaminated with bacteria, which can cause life-threatening diarrhea to someone who is already dehydrated.

JUST A DRINK

Clean water is essential to survival. The average human can live only three days without water, depending on climate and physical exertion.

Maybe that's why Jesus compared Himself to water. In John 4 we read about a journey He was taking from Judea to Galilee. He passed through Samaria and sat to rest beside Jacob's well. He was tired, hungry, and thirsty from the journey, and His disciples had gone to buy food. But He didn't have anything to use to draw water from the well to quench His thirst.

Then a woman showed up to get water.

"Will you give me a drink?" Jesus asked her kindly.

The woman replied, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" The Jews didn't associate with Samaritans, so this stranger's request surprised and confused her.

Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

The woman, intrigued by His words, probed, "Where can you get this living water?"

"I was thirsty and you gave Me drink." Matthew 25:35

Jesus began to explain to her that He was speaking of Himself, of His gifts of love, righteousness, and eternal life. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again," He said, pointing to the well, "but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman still didn't fully understand and said, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

Seeing her thirst for righteousness, Jesus broached the subject of her relationships. She had attempted to fulfill her needs in the wrong place—which is a temptation many people experience. Just as those who are physically thirsty are tempted to drink whatever water is available, no matter how contaminated, people who are thirsty emotionally, mentally, socially, or spiritually try to meet their needs with whatever is close at hand.

It might seem to quench their thirst initially, but then it causes diarrhea or cholera and initiates a deadly spiral into disease, addiction, or dysfunction. The very thing we crave can kill us—if it comes from the wrong source. We must question our cravings and submit them to God. What we all need is pure, clean water—water that restores and nurtures health. Living water.

DROPS FROM HEAVEN

Paul Smart told of how he sometimes sat in his office in Addis Ababa, watching the rain fall outside. He knew that just a three-hour drive down south, however, there wasn't a drop of rain. He desperately wanted to make sure everyone had the water they needed. Sometimes it involved trucking water down to them from the highland areas. Sometimes it meant repairing wells or getting boreholes functioning again. Sometimes it meant introducing water purifying equipment to an area.


In the same way, sometimes people need a good dose of God's love shared with them. Sometimes they need just a reminder—perhaps a simple prayer. Sometimes they need a new start, to feel forgiven and purified and able to move on. But all these needs can be met through only one source: Jesus.

"If there's just one night's rainfall," Paul observed, "the people in Ethiopia will all be there on the grass, gathering the water from puddles on the ground. Water is like gold here in these parts of the world. And people will do anything to get it."

We too should be willing to do anything to have Jesus in our life. We should do whatever He asks and give up anything in this world to follow Him. The Bible promises that if we seek Him with all our heart and with all our soul, we will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29).

He Himself said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. . . . Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them" (John 6:35, 56, NIV).

We should crave Jesus like we crave water and food. In Psalm 42:1, 2 we read David's words: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (NIV).

Only Jesus can ultimately satisfy every thirst. He is the living water. Let's drink of His love every day and share it with others. 

Lori Peckham is a professor of communication and English at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA. She is also a writer and editor.

“I’M GLAD YOU’RE HERE”

“I was a stranger and you invited Me in.”

Matthew 25:35, NIV

SOME TIME AGO I had occasion to pay several visits to a house in my community where I became acquainted with a young girl, about 6 years old, and a tentative friendship was formed between us, despite—or perhaps because of—the 50-year difference in our ages.

It was the sort of home that I was not accustomed to entering—but I had business there. My first impression was the general air of dishevelment and the strong odor of marijuana that permeated the atmosphere. Three children, including 6-year-old Jennifer, all rather sketchily clad, tumbled over one another on the unswept floor.

The young parents, totally ignoring the children, were engaged in a spirited verbal battle, liberally laced with colorful epithets.

Not many weeks later this young couple, who, although both married, were not married to each other, decided to “split” and promptly left the area, taking the two smaller children with them, but—her parentage apparently being a matter of some discussion—abandoning the 6-year-old to her own devices.

Subsequently, a compassionate Christian couple in the locality took the child into their home, and she appeared one Sabbath morning in my second-grade Sabbath School room.



“ . . . we are here, in this place, at this time, for that very purpose: to reach out to those who are hurting and desperately need an expression of His love.”

Jennifer was clean, attractively dressed, and, I quickly perceived, very frightened by the totally unfamiliar surroundings in which she found herself. The preliminary song service was already under way, so I smiled at her, found her a seat, and sat down beside her. A few minutes into the program a small hand timidly crept into mine, and a voice whispered in my ear, “I’m glad you’re here.”


THIS MOMENT

Not infrequently I have been moved to ask myself: “What are you doing here? Are you serving any genuinely useful purpose?”

Now, as the tiny fingers tightened around mine and I looked into Jennifer’s anxious face, I realized that I was there, at that moment, in that place, specifically to be a bridge over troubled water for one very bewildered little girl.

As Christians—followers of the compassionate Jesus—we too often forget that we are here, in this place, at this time, for that very purpose: to reach out to those who are hurting and desperately need an expression of His love.

The needs to which James addresses himself in the biblical book named after him—for impartiality, a gentleness in communication, humility, a concern for economic justice, and a desire for heavenly wisdom—are all rooted in a concern for those around us.

Such a mutual concern for others, both within and without the church, establishes a path to unity, a sure and simple antidote to the current climate of divisiveness that sets brother against brother and renders ineffectual the presentation of a loving Savior to those who look for Him in us. 

Arthur A. Milward graduated from Newbold College and served as a missionary in Kenya and an editor and college professor at Pacific Union College in California. He authored several books and numerous true stories, published in Reader’s Digest, The Saturday Evening Post, and Women of Spirit. He was a committed member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church until his death in 2009. This story is reprinted from *It’s Going to Be All Right*. Permission given by Review and Herald Publishing.





Slave Girl

*"I was
sick and
you looked
after Me."*

*Matthew
25:36, NIV*

A YOUNG GIRL IN A WAR-TORN COUNTRY awakes one night to screams. Enemy soldiers have attacked her village. The raid is brutal, bloody, and lightning-swift. Her people are caught off-guard. Before dawn lights the sky, the girl is in chains, being marched away from the only home she's ever known. She leaves behind her father, mother, brothers, and sisters. She has no idea if they're alive or dead or if she'll ever see any of them or her home again.

Fate is kind to her, relatively speaking. For a young girl captured in war and made a slave, there were many fates worse than domestic service in a wealthy home. The girl found herself working in the home of a high-ranking army commander, serving the commander's wife. Life was better than it could have been—except that it would never be the same. Home, family, and everything familiar was gone forever.

What an adjustment that must have been! Today, we would expect someone who'd been through such a terrible experience to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and perhaps she did. But she wasn't the only person in that house suffering. The master of the house, the army commander, suffered from the terrible skin disease known in Bible times as leprosy. There was no known cure, and the condition inevitably led to the sufferer being cast out of society.

I wonder what this slave girl felt when she first learned that Naaman, commander of the army of

Aram, was a leper. The natural reaction might be to gloat over the suffering of the man who had caused such suffering to her and her people. She might have reflected with pleasure on the fact that he would someday be outcast and cut off from his people, just as she now was from hers.

On the other hand, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Some people might react to such a tragic loss by moving forward and trying to forget the past. The slave girl might have said to herself, "I'm a citizen of Aram now. The God of Israel has forgotten me, so I'll forget Him. I'll assimilate to the culture, try to fit in. I'll even worship the gods of Aram." She might have felt sorry for Naaman and prayed to the gods of his country to heal him.

But the slave girl did neither. She didn't cling to bitterness and resentment, but neither did she forget who she was and where she came from. Somehow, though she was only a young girl and had suffered the loss of everything dear to her, she managed to be faithful to the God of heaven and still show respect and even love for the man who had taken her away from Israel. Hundreds of years before Jesus told people to love their enemies, she

Before dawn lights the sky, the girl is in chains.

demonstrated a spirit of forgiveness and generosity most Christians wouldn't be able to imitate.

Second Kings 5:3 (NIV) records what the slave girl said to Naaman's wife upon learning of her master's illness: "She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'"

HELD HOSTAGE

This young girl was able to show kindness and forgiveness to a man who, by every human standard, should have been her enemy. Yet in loving the enemy, she didn't compromise her own standards or beliefs. She wanted Naaman to be cured, and she pointed him toward the prophet of God, Elisha, in her own country.

That slave girl was able to walk a finer line than most of us can manage. When faced with an enemy—someone who has hurt us, someone who attacks everything we stand for—it's so natural to respond with resentment. We want to see them suffer just as they've made us suffer. We delight in their pain. Most of us are a long way from the spirit of Jesus, who said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NIV).

Perhaps we're afraid that if we love and pray for our enemies, we'll fall into the opposite trap. We'll condone their evil deeds, accept their values, maybe allow our standards to slip. It happens. There's a well-known phenomenon known as the "Stockholm syndrome" in which people who are held hostage begin to sympathize with their captors, to identify with the goals and aims of those who have taken them hostage. In a world where God's people are often hostages to sin and evil, we may be in danger of sympathizing with the enemy.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Naaman's slave girl wasn't a victim of Stockholm syndrome. She didn't identify with the people of Aram or their gods. She knew who she was—an Israelite, a servant of the God of heaven. She was generous and kind to her master, not because she was brainwashed, but because she truly understood the all-encompassing love of God. She had that rare ability to recognize that what another person has done is truly wrong, yet to forgive them and wish


the best for them. Forgiving Naaman didn't mean erasing who she was. It meant having the courage to stand up in that foreign place and speak the name of God's prophet, to point her captor toward the God who could heal and forgive him.

Sometimes we experience conflict with people and we can honestly say, "There are two sides to the story. We were both to blame." At other times, there's a very clear right and wrong, and we can see that we and those around us have been the victims of evil. Like the slave girl, we have been hurt and abused by evil people and the evil system they serve.

In that situation it takes courage to go on being who you are, holding to your own values and beliefs. It takes even more courage to love your enemies, to reach out in genuine kindness to those who have hurt you.

Naaman must have respected the young slave girl. Perhaps he saw in her something of what we see as we read her story today. He recognized a unique individual who was capable of speaking with truth and love in a difficult situation. So he listened to her advice, and he did what she suggested. He went to the prophet Elisha, and he was healed of his leprosy.

We never learn the sequel to the story. Naaman returned to his home healed, declaring that he would "never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord" (2 Kings 5:17, NIV). The slave girl's one-woman missionary effort had been a success, but as for her fate, we're not told.

It would be nice to believe that as a reward for her good advice, Naaman freed her and returned her to her home. It would be nice to believe that she found her family still alive and enjoyed a joyous reunion with them. Maybe she did. Or perhaps she lived out the rest of her life as a slave in a foreign land, with her strong faith continuing to sustain her. Whatever her destiny, her brief appearance on the pages of Scripture reminds us all of how God calls us to react in difficult times. 

Trudy J. Morgan-Cole is an award-winning author of numerous books and articles. She holds degrees in history and English literature and works as an adult educator in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. This article appeared in the book Daughters of Grace, published by Review and Herald Publishing Association. Reprinted with permission.



The Wedding Dress

"I needed clothes and you clothed Me." Matthew 25:36, NIV

IT WAS A PERFECT WEDDING on a crisp December day a week before Christmas. I felt beautiful in my creamy-white satin dress dotted with tiny pearls accentuating my petite frame and auburn hair. It was a season of joy and hope.

But joy and hope did not characterize the years that followed. How can one ever understand the mystery, the inner life, of another? I watched helplessly as my beloved succumbed to the grip of escalating alcoholism and the deceit that abides with it. I felt myself crumbling under the constant rain of emotional abuse, my energies revived only when that abuse began to turn its ugly face toward our two tiny children.

Joy and hope were gone; the marriage was in shambles. The wedding dress, carefully packed away in memory of a happier time, became a source of pain.

PACK IT AWAY

Pain was also the experience of another young woman. At the age of 27, Teresa was dying of cancer. The joy, the hope, that should have been hers was ebbing. At her side was her beloved, shattered by the reality that their life together would not be, their wedding day only a dream.

I was no longer the young bride in the satin dress. Now a single parent, I struggled to care for my little ones. I reflected with gratitude on the education that was mine.

“We want to get married before I die.”

The ability to use my nursing skills not only supported my young family but also provided a ministry of healing that could bless my patients and my wounded self as well. As I sought to lift Teresa’s mantle of pain, I gave thanks for the bittersweet blessings of my own life.

As morphine dripped through the intravenous line, Teresa whispered to me, “My fiancé and I have decided that we want to get married before I die. I know that may not make sense, but we want to be one before God, even if only for a short time. I don’t know how we would get married, though.”

“Let me talk to our chaplain,” I responded.

The next two days on the nursing unit assumed the atmosphere of a party. The wedding chapel at the hospital was reserved, the chaplain counseled with the young couple about the meaning and blessing of marriage, the social worker—a gifted violinist—offered to play for the ceremony, and the hospital cafeteria promised a special reception feast.

“I guess I’ll look kind of strange getting married in this hospital gown,” commented Teresa. Her funds exhausted, her hospitalization was now covered by state insurance for the indigent.

My dress, I thought. My tiny wedding dress. It would be just the right size for Teresa.

“I have a lovely dress you could wear,” I said. “I wore it for my wedding, and I think it would fit you.” As I described the dress and the delicate matching veil, Teresa’s eyes sparkled.

BEAUTIFUL BRIDE

The wedding day dawned clear and sunny. There was a hush on the nursing unit as the medical and nursing staff hurried through their morning tasks. An undercurrent of excitement and joy permeated the environment. The wedding dress hung at the foot of Teresa’s bed, ready to be draped gently on the bride. Teresa waited contentedly, a soft smile framing her gaunt face.

At 1:00 p.m. I came into the room to begin dressing the bride. Outside Teresa’s room a bridal bouquet of pink roses and baby’s breath, donated by the local florist, waited. Entering the room, I glanced first at the creamy-white satin dress dotted with tiny pearls, remembering my thoughts on that crisp December day many years before. I touched the fabric, enjoying its smoothness. Picking up the dress, I turned to Teresa, momentarily noting how peaceful she appeared.

“Teresa, are you ready to be a beautiful bride? Teresa? Teresa!” *Oh no. Please, God, not now. Please don’t let her die right now!*

Teresa glanced briefly at me, gently smiling her goodbye.

The atmosphere turned from joy to tears. Teresa’s fiancé sobbed inconsolably as he threw himself across her frail body. Her mother crumpled at the end of the bed. I held the wedding dress to my own bosom, splashing tears onto the tiny pearls.

Two days later Teresa’s mother and fiancé sought me out, asking if I could spare the time to attend the funeral. “Teresa loved you,” said her mother. “We would be honored if you could be with us at the funeral. She wanted so much to be a bride, and you understood.”

*I held the
dress to
my chest,
splashing
tears
onto
the tiny
pearls.*

She wanted so much to be a bride. In life she was denied this joy.

"My Teresa would have been beautiful in that lovely dress," said her mother.

If not beautiful in life, why not in death?

"No, Lord, no. That's too much," I said silently.

"My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God" (Colossians 2:2, NIV).

"What do you mean, Lord?" I asked.

Encourage them in heart and show them My love through your love.

With a faltering voice I asked, "How will Teresa be dressed for her funeral?"

Averted eyes—and then, "We haven't decided yet. All her clothes are so old and too big for her now."

"My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart . . ."

"Would you like to dress Teresa in her wedding dress?" I asked.

"But that is your wedding dress," said her fiancé.

"No, it was my wedding dress, but it was also to be Teresa's wedding dress. It's her dress. You may have it."

Teresa was buried in the creamy-white satin dress with tiny pearls. A filmy matching veil gently covered her face, still delicate in death.

I stood at her gravesite, trying to understand the mystery of God's ways. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord?'" (Romans 11:33, 34, NIV).

*This article appeared in the June 1996 issue of Adventist Review. At that time, **Barbara Frye Anderson, Dr.P.H.**, was an associate professor of international health and coordinator of the Maternal-Child-Family Health Program in the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California.*



Special Quotes

Jesus worked to relieve every case of suffering that He saw. He had little money to give, but He often denied Himself of food in order to relieve those who appeared more needy than He.

The Desire of Ages, p. 87

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. These cost those who give them nothing, but they leave behind a fragrance that surrounds the soul. Their effect can never be estimated. Not only are they a blessing to the receiver, but to the giver; for they react upon him. Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others.

Manuscript 17, 1899

Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God.

The Desire of Ages, p. 503

The powers of darkness stand a poor chance against believers who love one another as Christ has loved them, who refuse to create alienation and strife, who stand together, who are kind, courteous, and tender-hearted, cherishing the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. We must have the Spirit of Christ, or we are none of His.

Manuscript 103, 1902

He who created man made the lower animals also, and "His tender mercies are over all His works." Psalm 145:9. . . . It is because of man's sin that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." Romans 8:22. Suffering and death were thus entailed, not only upon the human race, but upon the animals. Surely, then, it becomes man to seek to lighten, instead of increasing, the weight of suffering which his transgression has brought upon God's creatures. He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant. A disposition to cause pain, whether to our fellow men or to the brute creation, is satanic. Many do not realize that their cruelty will ever be known, because the poor dumb animals cannot reveal it. But could the eyes of these men be opened, as were those of Balaam, they would see an angel of God standing as a witness, to testify against them in the courts above. A record goes up to heaven, and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 443



*"I was in
prison and you
came to Me."*

Matthew 25:36

Prayer at the Prison

THIS MORNING I STOOD in the parking lot outside Nebraska State Penitentiary with my friends Kyle and Leahh to pray for those in the prison system and those who work there. Half a dozen men lined the chain-link fence looking out at a world they may never be welcomed to enter again. My heart twisted up inside of me because I wanted to talk to them, to hear their story, to offer what freedom I could to them. But this is not permitted.

As we drove off, and even until now, a question won't dislodge itself from my heart: "Why do we hide away the most broken among us?"

But I know why, at least I know why I'm OK with it. I can forget about them when they're locked up, faceless and unseen. I can go on with my plans, my issues, my ideals, and my happiness much more effectively if I don't know or see them.

Someone once said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18, 19, NIV).

And then somewhere along His life He became a prisoner, He became a captive, and I think He knew it was coming because He laid out for all those who were (and are) willing to hear His words the same anointing. He also said, "I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matthew 25:36).

He said some other things as well, but it's becoming clearer and clearer to me that how we treat one another, anyone who's made in the image of God, is a most important issue. It's almost as if the love we have for God is primarily lived out by how we treat others.

The most broken among us.
Those different from us.
Those scared.
Those who hate.
The poor.
Those incarcerated.
The forgotten.
Us.

Mic Henton is youth pastor of the College View Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska.



“When you show people compassion and do the practical things, the spiritual things follow.”

9 Ways to Do Prison Ministry

You might be surprised to learn that there are many ways to show compassion to prisoners. Look over this list and see if God is calling you to action.

1. Visit. Matthew 25 gives a glowing affirmation to those who *visit* souls in prison. It's not convenient. You will need to submit paperwork to the corrections department before you will be approved for visiting privileges. Then you have to show up at the facility during visiting hours—which may be severely limited. But the effort you make to visit someone in person will be rewarded with deep appreciation. Nothing breaks through prison isolation like a face-to-face meeting with someone who cares.

2. Write a letter. There are few things to look forward to in prison. Getting a letter is one of them. Prisoners press forward when they hear the words “Mail call!” “In prison, meaningful communication is *everything*,” says a former inmate. A letter is always welcome. It is physical evidence that they are not forgotten. Check the facility's website to find the rules for what is not allowed in a letter. Usually, staples, tape, or glue will result in the letter being rejected. One more thing: Holidays are awful in prison. Inmates may never see a Christmas tree or a bit of red ribbon. “On a scale of 1 to 10,” says a former prisoner, “if a letter is 5, a Christmas card is a 10.”

3. Start a van ministry. If there's one action that is better than visiting a prisoner yourself, it is helping their family come to the institution for a visit. Many families of inmates don't own a car and can't afford taxi fares to prisons, which are often located a distance from residential areas. You can be a great blessing by driving one or more families for weekend visits.

4. Donate clothing. How do you dress for success when all you've worn for years is prison orange? In Wilmington, North Carolina, Jerri Holliday provides designer clothes for the recently released in a boutique setting. Her clients are dressed to impress on their next job interview.

5. Contribute toiletries. There can be religion in a bar of soap. Some ministries provide critical toiletries for indigent inmates who have no cash to buy personal items such as soap and toothpaste.

6. Join Angel Tree. The Angel Tree ministry provides gifts for the children of inmates at Christmastime. Local children are reached by nearby church congregations working with prison chaplains. Google “Angel Tree” to find out how you can get involved.

7. Support families. You can establish or help lead small groups that provide support for families of the incarcerated. This can be a Bible study for spouses or fiancés of inmates. Narcotics Anonymous and Al Anon groups also encourage family members and prepare them for life after their loved one's release.

8. Support released prisoners. It is often said that being outside is harder than being inside prison. Ex-cons need help navigating social services, obtaining an ID, finding housing, and getting a job. Your skills on the computer or filling out paperwork could be a lifesaver.

9. Send reading material. This year you can join church members who are reaching 100,000 prisoners with *Message* magazine. Other outreach magazines such as *Vibrant Life* or *Glow Tracts* can bring the gospel of peace to a hard place.

Dr. Cleveland Houser is executive director of *Don't Follow Me* and a prison ministry consultant and trainer for the North American Division.

THE TIPPING

point

“Change, like sunshine, can be a friend or a foe, a blessing or a curse, a dawn or a dusk.”—William Arthur Ward

ACCORDING TO THE Merriam-Webster dictionary online, a tipping point refers to “the critical point in a situation, process, or system beyond which a significant and often unstoppable effect or change takes place.”

We’ve all experienced tipping point experiences. They may appear like a sudden storm or creep along, alerting us with subtle signs pointing toward the inevitable. Many of these defining moments have a powerful, life-changing negative or positive effect on us. They can push us beyond our comfort zone as we attempt to adjust and make sense of change-of-direction circumstances.

Some of life’s tipping points could include:

POSITIVE MOMENTS

1. After working devotedly to improve your lifestyle, you are rewarded by seeing the scale move and your body become stronger and healthier.
2. At work you find your efforts being rewarded with success, appreciation, and promotion (or a raise in pay).
3. You are moving. It’s an opportunity for a change of job. Or you are retiring. This is a major life-changing, joyous event full of potential.

NEGATIVE MOMENTS

1. Your doctor informs you that in spite of your good health habits, you are having some serious heart function issues that need further investigation.
2. A disturbing moment occurs when you learn your department at work is being closed down. You and your coworkers no longer have jobs.
3. You are moving. This change has potential opportunities, but you are absorbed with anxiety over leaving all that’s comfortable and familiar behind.

*“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart,
all you who hope in the Lord.” Psalm 31:24*

ENTER THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

This monstrous pandemic entered our lives at first disguised as a temporary disruption to normal routine. Schools and businesses were closed, and we stayed home as advised, with the disillusioned thinking that this was just a minor crisis of a few days, or weeks at the most. It was generally expected that everything would soon return to normal.

However, COVID-19 was—and still is—not done with us yet. Its presence is causing seemingly endless change and challenge, affecting us all emotionally, psychologically, socially, and economically in varying degrees through:

1. Frequent news commentaries reporting on the spread and deadly effects of the virus on states, cities, families, hospitals, and frontline workers.
2. New self-defense patterns of behavior, including mandates to stay home as much as possible, keep a prescribed distance from others, mask our faces, and avoid group gatherings such as worship services, weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, seasonal community festivals, and holiday celebrations.
3. Disruptions and restrictions relating to international and homeland travel opportunities.
4. The prolonged forced closure of businesses and services, causing bankruptcies and widespread loss of financial income to thousands of business owners and families.

5. Hospitals becoming overloaded with high volumes of critically ill COVID-19 patients, and because of the risk of contamination no longer allowing patient visitor privileges. Routine hospital surgical and medical procedures are limited in availability.
6. Schools initially closed now faced with local and federal governmental debates and projections regarding future educational procedures and safety for students, teachers, and administration.

COPE, HOPE, AND HELP

The coronavirus pandemic presents a whole basketful of stresses and changes significantly affecting everyone worldwide. Fear, anxiety, loss of connection with others, loss of security, loss of freedom, even loss of family and friends through illness—all can have a huge impact on any of us, pushing us to despair and depression. However, we can choose ways to help ourselves cope with these enormous challenges.

We have the power to cope. Any change offers us the opportunity to strengthen coping skills and to reshape or refocus our future. Coping techniques can include:

- **Keep informed.** Keep current with recommendations and advice from national and local authorities through trusted news sources, taking care to limit exposure to news that may increase our anxiety or distress.
- **Have a routine.**
 - Get up and go to bed at regular times.
 - Keep up with personal hygiene.
 - Eat healthful meals at regular times.
 - Exercise routinely.
 - Keep connections with family and friends going strong.
 - Maintain regular time for inspirational reading, worship, and prayer.
 - Reserve time for fun and creative activity.



“You may not always have a comfortable life. And you will not always be able to solve all the world’s problems all at once. But don’t ever underestimate the impact you can have, because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.”

—Michelle Obama

We have the power to hope. It was only a few months ago that our lives were fairly predictable, defined by work, family, recreation, and worship. No one foresaw how quickly we would experience complete disruption. Confined to our homes, unable to see friends and loved ones or enjoy activities that surrounded our lives, what we need now is a large dose of *hope* to sustain us through this difficult time.

- Hope in the tireless efforts of scientists and doctors to treat, heal, and produce vaccine protection.
- Hope in the eventual return of societies to a more peaceful existence based on evidence of global survival of pandemics in the past.
- Hope that we all will emerge having a deeper appreciation for faithful blessings ever provided by a loving heavenly Father.
- Hope in the sure promises of a heavenly home free of all that now is so troublesome.

We have the power to help. Are you thinking that since you are not a medical worker there is nothing you can do to help? Actually, each of us can make a positive difference in the face of COVID-19 by tapping into our individual talents and strengths and sharing them. Studies show that when we get actively involved in reaching out to others, our own mental and physical health improves. Helping directs our concentration away from ourselves and all that is frightening and confusing to contributing meaning to the lives of others. Start getting involved, and magically more opportunities will present themselves to you.

Need some starter suggestions?

- Phone a neighbor, friend, or family member just to check on how they are doing.
- Write and send thoughtful or funny messages to shut-in children or the elderly, or to encourage the sick and discouraged.

- Offer to help with or teach an online class to a homeschool child.
- Teach or help out with a craft or cooking class through the aid of electronic technology.
- If able, participate in volunteering at a food bank or with the distribution of clothing and other basic essentials at a community center.
- Make a donation to a charitable organization, helping them and boosting your sense of well-being.
- Tell our heavenly Father of your willingness and desire to be of service; then watch how He will answer that prayer!

LAST WORDS

Focusing on positive methods of coping with adversity—mentally, physically, and emotionally—will better equip us to endure, learn from, and survive challenges. Even during a chaotic pandemic, maintaining hope keeps us courageous with our focus on the future. And finally, our smallest acts of kindness and helpfulness can make a world of difference to others, and in the process enhance our own inner strength and spiritual growth. 7

REFERENCES:

sva.edu/features/5-tips-for-staying-emotionally-healthy-during-covid-19

www.higherbrainliving.com/2016/05/what-is-your-tipping-point/

www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/11things-remember-with-sudden-life-changes.html

www.reliableplant.com/Read/12018/why-change-is-so-hard,-what-you-can-do-about-it

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html

www.jpost.com/opinion/the-importance-of-feeling-hope-in-the-midst-of-coronavirus-625897

greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/helping_others_can_help_you_cope_with_lockdown

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.



Weddings and Jesus' Return

I LOVE WEDDINGS! If I could have my way, I would be the first guest to arrive and the last to leave at each wedding to which I am invited.

From the time I was a small girl my heart thrilled at the idea of being part of a wedding party. First it was the longing to be chosen as a flower girl. Then as a young woman I yearned to stand with the bride as her maid of honor. And then of course I dreamed of being the bride in my own wedding! To daydream, plan for, and carry out the myriad details of such a special day was not work for me as much as it was fun.

One of Jesus' most important stories is set at a wedding. In this story of challenge and warning, Jesus tells His followers about 10 women; these women represent us, and some commentaries suggest they represent God's church.

All 10 women are invitees to a wedding. All are excited, expectant, perhaps even honored to be among the guests. But the Bridegroom is delayed, and the celebration is put on hold as everyone waits. The wait is more than a few minutes; it is a long wait!

Does this story relate to us? Yes, indeed. Take the five foolish virgins, who went off to buy more oil and upon returning discovered that the Bridegroom had already come and the door was shut. This passage challenges me as a pastor's

wife. Am I ready for Jesus' return? What oil am I lacking? Is it the oil of compassion for my husband or in supporting him? Is it the oil of being still before Christ, or the oil of mercy?

This is a personal question for each of us to answer. Can you be still and ask the Lord to speak to your heart about your "oil lack"? Unlike the five foolish virgins, who were scampering around trying to buy "oil," you and I can show up at the wedding prepared and not lacking, with an extra vessel filled.

You may ask, "How in the world do I fill this extra need? I'm so tired. Is it one more thing I have to do? The church members are draining me. My husband's schedule wearies me. The children's demands don't stop."

Jesus wants to provide you with the extra oil. He is the miracle worker. The wise virgins knew this.

He is still the miracle worker. Jesus is still the Bridegroom wanting to help us get the extra oil to persist in our waiting. It is nothing that we have to drum up on our own. When we recognize the need and ask, Jesus longs to pour out living water (and oil) into our vessels and perform another wedding miracle. 7

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.



SMELLS LIKE *Salvation*

WHAT PRICE WOULD I PAY TO SAVE THIS CREATURE?

WHILE HIKING ON THE FIRE road near our home one day, I rounded a curve and came upon an animal in trouble. A smelly black-and-white animal. It had gotten caught in a steel trap.

Marks in the dirt indicated that the creature had dragged itself around and around, trying to release the trap's grip. I immediately felt sorry for it and wanted to help.

But as I thought of what I might do, a challenge presented itself: How could I help the poor animal without paying the price? I knew enough about skunks to respect their proficiency in chemical warfare.

PLAN A

I began by talking calmly to the skunk while inching toward it. I realized I would have to get close in order to press down on the trap spring with my foot. As I took a better look at the trap, I also discovered that it would require pressure on both sides to release.

Each time I moved toward the skunk, it gave the unmistakable signal that it considered me an enemy and was ready to take the necessary measure to repel me. Each time I backed off, my mind raced to come up with a brilliant strategy.

Jesus laid down His life to spring the trap for us.

Finally I decided to continue my walk while thinking—and yes, even praying—about the victim. My walk would bring me past the skunk again, and I knew it wouldn't be going anywhere. A little time wouldn't be fatal to it, and it might enable me to formulate a plan.

PLAN B?

But as I walked, no plans emerged. I finally concluded that if I was going to free the skunk, I must be willing to pay the price.

When I returned to the site, I scouted the area for resources. I came up with a live bushy branch I would use to divert the skunk's aim. I also found a hefty dead limb I would use to help open the trap once I released the spring—or to apply the coup de grace if it became vicious. After all, I had limits to the price I was willing to pay.

I tried to imagine the skunk's thinking as I approached with what looked like a weapon in each hand. And sure enough, it misread my motives. It began to fire away.

I put the bushy branch to work diverting the skunk's aim. Its shots stayed around my ankles, but the stench filled the air.


I continued to move toward the trap and finally saw through the branch that my feet had succeeded in putting enough pressure on the steel to release its jaws. The skunk could now pull its trapped foot free. But it wouldn't do it. It was too busy firing at me.

I told it in clear English that it was free, that it could get out of the trap. But it had been trapped so long that it apparently didn't believe it, and its foot was probably numb from the pressure. I actually had to use the limb to lift its paw out.

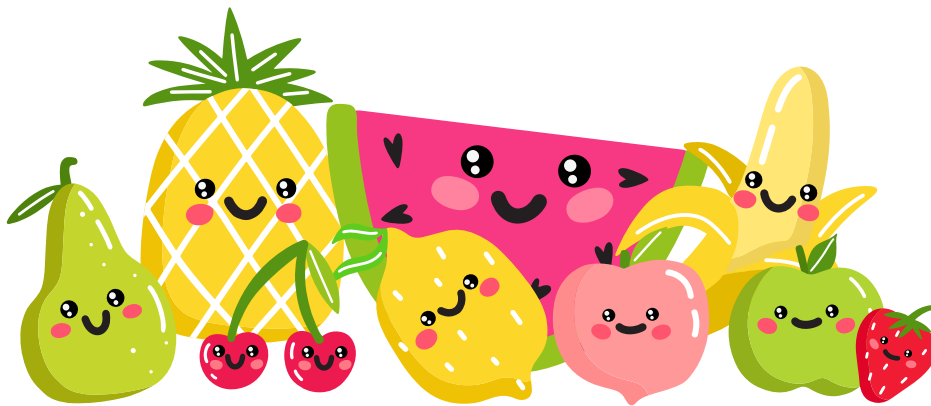
When it realized what had happened, it just waddled off up the hill, tail held high, without a nod of thanks to its rescuer. A rescuer who now smelled a lot like the creature he had rescued.

As I made my way home with the acrid stench filling my nostrils, I couldn't help comparing our human situation to that of the skunk. Our pain sometimes numbs us to the point that we're not even aware we are trapped in sin and earthly pressures.

And I thought of the One who came to our rescue and who set no limits on the price to be paid for our release. We need only recognize and accept the salvation that has come to us.

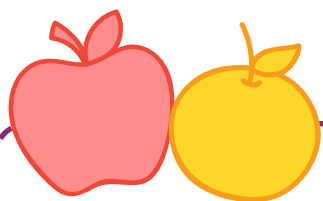
Jesus has laid down His own life in order to spring the trap for us. If we will step out of the trap, abundant life awaits us (John 10:10, 11). 

Lee R. Tripp pastored for 40 years in Ohio, New Jersey, and California before retiring. This article originally appeared in the Adventist Review, August 18, 1994.



be fruitful!

WHAT GOOD FRUITS have you grown in your life recently? Which ones do you want to grow with the Holy Spirit's help? Use some of these ideas in your family worship. Ask the Holy Spirit to live in your life so that these fruits of the Spirit grow stronger in you.



FRUITFUL VERSE

Cut colored paper into fruit shapes. Read Galatians 5:22, 23 and write each of the nine fruits of the Spirit on a different fruit shape. Shuffle the papers and see how quickly you can arrange them in the right order. Or tie the fruit shapes to a length of string or yarn to make a verse garland.

JOY

Read Psalm 96. It's bursting with joy and praise! Write your own psalm of joy to God, or compose a happy song about the joy that God gives you, or make something with your craft materials to show how happy you are to be a child of God.

LOVE

Cut out a really big paper heart. Ask each person in your family how they felt God's love in the past week. Write all their answers on the big heart. Then give each person their own paper heart. Ask them to write their name in the middle of the heart and write around their name all the ways they like to be loved. Put the hearts where they can be seen to remind your family to share love with one another every day.





PEACE

Find a peaceful picture in a magazine or calendar or draw one yourself. Search for a Bible verse that helps you to feel peaceful. Write the verse on the picture and give your picture verse to someone who is going through a hard time. Or keep it to remind you to trust God for peace when you feel worried and upset.

PATIENCE

Love is patient (1 Corinthians 13:4). Which Bible characters do you think were the most patient? When is it hardest to be patient? When you are waiting in line? When you are waiting for your birthday or a vacation? When other children are annoying you? Try to practice patience this week. Think of fun things to do when you have to wait or when you ride in the car. Do or make something to help you to be patient and wait cheerfully.

KINDNESS

Make a list of people in your church who might be lonely, such as older people, people living alone, people who are new to your town or country, or someone who cannot leave their home. Work with your parents to do something really kind for each of the people on your list. Whenever you are being kind to others, it's just like you are caring for Jesus, and He loves what you do!

GOODNESS

What does it mean to have goodness in your life? Goodness is not about being perfectly obedient and doing everything right. The Pharisees tried to do this, but they cared more about themselves than other people, and that wasn't good at all. Perhaps goodness is when you love God and other people so much that you want to do the best you can, cheerfully and kindly, just because you love them. Think of someone in the Bible who was good. Act out the story of their life, write their story, or draw a picture from their life.



FAITHFULNESS

Read Hebrews 11 and discover some of the people in the Bible who were faithful. Draw around your hand. On each finger write one reason that you trust in God. Or ask some of the adults in your family and church to tell you their stories about why they trust in God. Write them in a faith journal.



HUMILITY

Jesus showed humility by washing the feet of His disciples. He showed them that serving others is very special. Wash the feet of everyone in your family and then rub some sweet-smelling lotion or oil into their skin. Or clean their shoes, take out the trash, or learn how to clean the bathroom. Humility is discovering that when you love other people, you will do anything for them, however unpleasant! And then you discover that this kind of service makes you feel warm and happy because you are also serving God.



FRUIT SALAD

Use your favorite fruits to make a fruit salad or smoothie. Try to include nine different fruits to represent the nine fruits of the Spirit. While you enjoy your treat with your family, talk about where you have seen the fruit of the Spirit in each other's lives. Thank God for all the amazing fruits He has created for us to enjoy!



SELF-CONTROL

Self-control is hard to develop, but it feels good! Give each person in your family a healthy sweet treat. See who can wait the longest before eating it. Practice letting other people go first when you are in line, or let them choose what they want first. Enjoy the great feeling of being able to control yourself for a little while.

FRUIT MATCH



Try to find a fruit that matches each of the fruits of the Spirit in some way and arrange them in order. If you can't get any of the fruits where you live, just draw pictures of them or make them out of modeling clay. For example:

Love – strawberries (because they are heart-shaped)

Joy – cherries (because they sparkle joyfully)

Goodness – apple (an apple a day keeps the doctor away)

Patience – pomegranate (because of the patience you need to pick out the seeds) **7**

Karen Holford writes from England, where she grows black currants and raspberries.

— DEAR DEBORAH

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28

Dear Deborah,

Due to recent worldwide events, my husband and I have been spending more time than ever on the phone with concerned church members. Lives are hurting, people are confused, many are fearful, and they are turning to us for answers.

We love them dearly and want to help. Sometimes we spend hours upon hours providing an attentive ear. We are doing our very best to provide hope and spiritual encouragement to those in need, but the tension in our own lives seems to be on the rise. In addition, there are the numerous emails, text messages, and Zoom meetings that consume us to the point of exhaustion.

My own heart is heavy, and my compassion meter is low. I feel guilty and overwhelmed. How can I navigate my own emotions and daily tasks while simultaneously providing “life support” to so many who are hurting?

*Sincerely,
Concerned*

Dear Concerned,

Providing almost nonstop emotional support to others can be exhausting. The rigorous cycle of repetitive, lengthy telephone visits, emails, Zoom calls, and text messages can become physically and mentally draining—often leaving us breathless and frustrated.

If we neglect self-care, the consequences can be unhealthy. Thankfully, balance *is* achievable, which will equip you to provide congregational support while protecting your mental health.

Consider implementing the following options to help your ministry and hearts thrive:

1. Incorporate a daily schedule and set limits for all phone calls, messages, etc.
2. Limit screen time on personal electronic devices.
3. Take “oxygen” breaks regularly. Go for a short walk, stretch, or listen to Scripture songs.
4. Develop positive coping skills for negative feedback.
5. Eat healthy, well-balanced meals along with adhering to established mealtimes.
6. Get plenty of rest and uninterrupted sleep.
7. Avoid isolating your emotions. Talk with your spouse and spend time reading God’s Word together. Pray together often.

Remember, Jesus incorporated “time-out” for prayer, meditation, and rest. We can’t help others if we haven’t taken good care of ourselves. He loves us so much and has provided wonderful examples to give us hope to help heal others in need.

Prayerfully,
Deborah

10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

SEEKING REVIVAL

January 6–16, 2021

“Not by might, nor
by power, but by
My Spirit, says the
Lord of hosts.”

ZECHARIAH 4:6, ESV

WWW.TENDAYSOFPRAAYER.ORG

