

# THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

Vol. 37 | Issue Four 2020

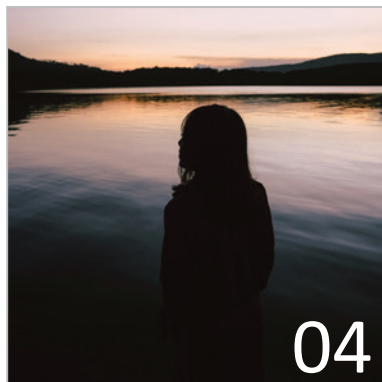


ADAPTING  
TO  
*change*



## ON THE COVER

Change happens . . . whether we want it or not. Whether we instigate it or feel like it's simply thrust upon us. In this issue you'll read stories of people who faced changes—and you'll hear how they reacted to them, handled them, and learned from them. You'll certainly relate to some of their feelings and situations, and hopefully you'll be reminded of the peace that can come with trusting God with our future.



## | ARTICLES

- 04 SILENCE**  
It can be wonderful—unless you're waiting for a word from God.  
*Ruth Boyd*
- 06 BURNED YET BLESSED**  
When the fire rushed toward our town of Paradise, we wondered how our lives would change.  
*Delinda Hamilton*
- 12 GIVING UP MY PLANS**  
I've learned to lean on God and trust Him for the future. It's the only way to live.  
*Daniela Goia*
- 16 LESS CAN BE MORE**  
Are you facing financial challenges? I've been there, and God came through.  
*Jerry Page*

## | FEATURES

- 03 EDITORIAL**  
Smile at the Future
- 09 TIPS TO THRIVE**  
7 Ways to Bless Others
- 10 FAMILY MATTERS**  
Change Happens . . .
- 15 GETTING REAL**  
First Love
- 21 DEAR DEBORAH**  
"I Had to Leave My Job"
- 22 LIFESTYLE**  
When the Dog Bites
- 25 SPECIAL QUOTES**
- 26 KIDS**  
On the Move!
- 29 NEWS FROM THE FIELD**

### 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. Scriptures marked NASB are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

PHOTO CREDITS: freepik, Getty Images, pexels.com, unsplash.com



*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: Ellen Musselman  
 Printed in the U.S.A.  
[ministerial.adventist.org/spouses](http://ministerial.adventist.org/spouses)



# Smile AT THE FUTURE

MY YOUNGER SISTER AND I have a lot in common. We hold similar values and enjoy the same types of food and hobbies, so we always have a great time when we're together.

But there's one way in which we are very different—our love for change. Over the past 10 years, my sister has moved five times, owned and sold four different cars, and worked at three different jobs. And each time she moved houses or jobs or got a new car, it was just because she wanted to! She thrives on change—the adventure of something new, something different. I often benefit from her bags of hand-me-down clothes because she's always buying new things and loves to share her older stuff.

I, on the other hand, dread change. I get attached to people and things, and the thought of moving, or having to leave our current church and community, immediately makes me sad. One day when reading Proverbs 31, while noting the admirable traits of the virtuous woman, I was convicted by the line “she smiles at the future” (verse 25, NASB). It wasn't like I hadn't read this before. My husband and I had actually included it in our personalized wedding vows years before. But it was convicting because I often don't do it—especially when it comes to news of change.

While enjoying the job my husband and I had leading a youth evangelistic team, we heard we were going to be sent to the seminary. After finishing seminary, we received a letter telling us what church we would be placed in upon graduation. Then, after loving my work and the friends we made in our first church, we received the call to our current church.

Every time news of change came, it felt like I got punched in the stomach. I felt heartbroken every time. I cried every time. I didn't want to go every time. Why? The fear of the unknown. The reality of leaving behind people I loved. The idea that it couldn't be as good as the last place. But Proverbs 31:25 is also convicting because it takes me back to what God has actually done.

We made the move to Andrews University for seminary and enjoyed our time there so much that I didn't want to leave! We loved our teachers and classes. We made lifelong friends and enjoyed working and spending time with them. We watched God work in amazing ways in the lives of those we were reaching out to; we even enjoyed the weather and living in a new climate!

Then we moved to our first church—a church that was supposedly one of the most difficult in the conference. It was there that I had the opportunity to work with young families and start a ministry for kids that brought me so much joy and fulfillment. The friends I made there kept life and ministry fun. I was heartbroken to leave.

Then on to our current church. I had nothing against coming, except that I knew it couldn't be as good as our past assignment. But, oh how wrong I've been. We had been here only two weeks when I told my husband, “I hope we never have to move from here.” And five and a half years later, I still feel the same way. We have been able to be part of a growing, thriving church ministry that is a joy! I love the people here, and God has brought the dearest friends into my life. And I bet you can guess—I hope we never have to leave!

God has used each of these experiences to help change my perspective. I really can smile at the future. Change might not be comfortable for me, but God has proven Himself to be more than faithful. He has always given me something to smile about; why would that change in the future?

I love how Ellen White recounts, “In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”\*

No matter what change is coming your way, I pray that God gives you the strength to “smile at the future.” ■

\* *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 204

---

**Leah Page** is a pastor's wife in California. She adores her husband and twin baby girls. She also enjoys helping with different aspects of ministry, from worship leading to children's ministries to work at their church's community farm.





# Silence

**DOES GOD'S SILENCE ACTUALLY HELP  
US GROW? WHAT CAN WE GAIN  
DURING THOSE QUIET TIMES?**

SILENCE. IT CAN BE LIKE GOLD. A treasure to be found and desired. Especially when our lives have been full of busyness and people.

When all four of our boys were little, my husband, Darron, would sometimes gift me with taking all of them away from the house, leaving me in silence. Glorious (non-little-boy-filled) silence. I would drink in those rare hours. To this day I love the silence of a walk, especially an early-morning walk in the pine trees at Middle East University near my apartment in Lebanon.

Yet when God is silent it can be confusing and disappointing, leaving us feeling abandoned. Especially if we have big decisions to make or problems we need wisdom to solve—and we can't seem to hear or find Him. Can you reflect on a time when you did not hear from the Lord? How did it make you feel?

Mother Teresa wisely stated, "God is a friend of silence." Groan. I don't like the seasons when He is silent. I prefer the times when I open His Word and hear messages that feed my soul. I'm also extremely grateful when we are seeking direction and answers come that we know are from Him. Refreshingly, God speaks to my heart often.

However, He does take me through seasons when I strain to hear anything. Perhaps it is because my own inner voice is speaking too loudly or the nonstop conversations in my head are too noisy as I process life. Whatever the reason, I struggle to find the friendship in silence.

## **SILENT TREATMENT**

I heard a speaker say once, "Sometimes God withholds the answer to keep the conversation going." This is such a power tool to get my attention. In human relationships it can look like this. Say, for example, I send a friend a text





## We each should ask how we best hear God.

For myself, I have learned that if I want to hear God, then I must be silent myself. I must create time and space to quiet my anxious, noisy, nonstop chattering heart and *listen*. At a Captivating Conference, they described it as “commanding silence over my own inner thoughts.” Even Job’s friend knew that God would speak: “For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it” (Job 33:14).

I think we each should ask how we best hear God. For me, it is with my Bible and through journaling that I can hear from Him most clearly. Also, through intentionally being quiet and not just stopping the “little boy noise” (they are not so little anymore) around me, but more importantly stopping the noise in my head and heart. Isaiah 30:15 says, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”

I pray that the next time God uses the silent treatment on me, I will not doubt His love or His desire to guide me. I pray that instead I will press in. Press in deeply to His intentional invitation to truly listen. To be still. To understand that there is a deep friendship awaiting in the silence. That it is an invitation to keep the conversation going. For if He always answered immediately, would I truly seek Him? Would you? ■

message, but she fails to answer it for several days. I will think of her many more times than if she answered it immediately. I may flail around in a low-esteem world and wonder if she doesn’t like me or if I offended her, but her silence can lead me to desire the conversation even more.

Another example is when I would send the doctor I worked for questions on behalf of patients. Usually she was quick to answer. However, at times she simply did not answer. Her silence would send me diving into books and trusted websites to find the answers myself. Often that silence made me a better student of hers.

So, what does God’s silence do for you and me? Does it cause us to think of Him more? Does it call us to dig deeper in His Word and in prayer and listening? Or does it cause us to flounder around in doubt?

---

**Ruth Boyd** is a passionate nurse, mom of four boys, and wife of a pastor and adventurous man. Her heart is for encouraging women in the journey. She lives in Beirut, Lebanon. All the boys have flown from the nest but still check in with modern technology.

# Burned Yet

## Blessed

WOULD WE SURVIVE THIS  
DEVASTATING FIRE? WOULD  
WE STILL HAVE A HOME?

I HEARD A PANICKED, INSISTENT KNOCK at the front door. I opened it to find my neighbor standing there with sheer terror in his face. He burst out, "There's a fire! You have to leave *now!*"

I will never forget that look. The fear in his eyes scared me. Panic and defeat flashed through his countenance as he added, "I'm afraid we are going to lose it all."

I didn't know then just how prophetic that statement would be. With that, the neighbor was gone.

I shut the door, and my mind began reeling. I tried to tell myself to think. *What do I do? How much time do I have? What do I grab? The kids. The animals.* My adrenaline was pumping, but my brain stalled. I seemed paralyzed. I didn't know how to evacuate. I grew up with tornados, not fires. My brain just wouldn't give me answers.

I yelled to the two kids with me in the house, "There's a fire!"

They both yelled back, "What?" Unbelief and confusion sent them running into the room.

At that moment my husband called. He said, "I was about to drop [our daughter] off at school, but they told me not to. There is a fire blowing up the canyon by our house. I'll be home in eight minutes."

I told the kids they had eight minutes to grab what they wanted out of the house. My 8-year-old son went into action. He started snatching Tupperware containers to carry his lizards, snakes, frogs, turtles, and whatever other animals he had (he is a typical 8-year-old boy who catches anything that moves).

I envied his mind that seemed to be thinking so easily. The cat? Where was our cat? I ran outside to look for him. To my shock, the sky was now black. I was surprised how quickly things had changed in just a few minutes. Ash was falling like snow, and the sky was becoming darker by the second.

# Ash was falling like snow, and the sky was becoming darker by the second.

I called for the cat. Sometimes he would be gone for days at a time. Was he around? Would I find him? I had heard him meowing in the middle of the night. I kicked myself for not getting up in the night to let him in. Fortunately, I found him curled up in one of our Jeeps. I grabbed him. Then I ran for the cat cage. I saw it lying on the ground outside of our house.

We had just moved to Paradise, California, three weeks before, so we had not finished unpacking. There were boxes lying around. I put my hand on the side of the house as I reached with my other hand to grab the cat cage. As I did so, my shoulder popped out of joint. I now really *was* paralyzed! "God, please help me!" I prayed. "I don't think I can drive out of the fire this way. Please make my shoulder go back in."

I stood there wondering what to do. The pain made me unable to function. *How do I put my shoulder back in? I don't know how to do it.* Then miraculously it popped back in. I breathed a silent thank You to God.

I grabbed the cat cage and quickly put the cat inside. As I ran to the other side of the house, I saw my son loading his animals into the car. I put the cat in and headed back inside the house. My daughter was starting to become overwhelmed by her own thoughts. I tried calming her. I tried to assure her that everything would be fine. But would it be?

## GETAWAY

My husband pulled into the driveway eight minutes later. My other daughter climbed out of the car. We all felt an oppressive, impending doom. There just wasn't time for anything else. I locked the front door, never dreaming that I would not return to this home.

My husband yelled, "Turn the cars around; we have to get out of here!"

We could now hear the roar of the fire approaching us. We heard explosions as the fire destroyed everything in its path. We all jumped in the cars and started pulling out. This fire was unique in that it did not burn in a straight line. The canyon was acting like a chimney, and the fire was blowing up and raining down burning debris on us. As we were driving out of our driveway, our yard was already on fire!

*How do we get out of town?* we wondered. We were so new to this town that I knew of only one way out; even then I had to use my GPS. I'm sure you can guess the Scripture that I was saying over and over in my head: "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isaiah 43:2, NIV).

As we merged onto the main road, we found ourselves gridlocked. Everyone was frantic to get out of the fire's way. People were scrambling to connect with loved ones. Firefighters were attempting to put out the fires that had started in town, but the fire was raining down continually. Movement was painfully slow. People were becoming frustrated and panicked. Emotions were high. I noticed the kids trying to hold back tears. We were all trying to talk ourselves through our emotions.

I got separated from my husband as we were driving. He decided to drive on the bike path in an attempt to bypass some of the congestion. We eventually reconnected and headed down into the nearby town of Chico. As we came into the next town, we could finally see some more light of day. We felt relief but at the same time a deep sense of despair. There were still people up on that ridge fighting for their lives. There were so many people up there and only three ways out. Would they make it? I felt guilt. I wished I had a list of people who needed help getting out.

The fire moved so quickly that we evacuated three times that day. Finally, by 10:00 that night we had landed in a sweet couple's house; they gave us a bed to sleep in. The next morning we knew we needed a systematic way



## Burned Yet Blessed

of checking on people. We wanted to know if they had evacuated safely, and we wanted to know where they were staying.

### AFTERMATH

Immediately love and care started pouring out to us. Cases of water were donated. Toothbrushes and toothpaste arrived, as well as clothes. Thousands of people were displaced from the fire, and most of them had nothing. No food, no water, no clothes, no place to stay. Immediately we knew why God had called us to Paradise, California. People needed help! We started calling our friends. Churches, individuals, and organizations began feeding, clothing, and providing for the needs of hundreds.

News started trickling in of what buildings and homes had burned. We were not allowed to return to Paradise because there was still active fire, so we relied upon those firefighters, EMS personnel, chaplains, news reporters, and others who were allowed back in the area. There were often contradictory reports. If a picture was taken of the site, then we knew for sure that it was gone.

I remember unloading cases of water, and the man next to me got a text. He pulled out his phone and looked at it. He said, "Well, it looks like my home burned too." He turned off his phone, put it back in his pocket, and kept unloading water bottles. One after another received the news that their homes were burned to the ground. I wondered about mine.

Finally, word came. My husband called and said, "It's gone. There is nothing left."

Tears welled up in my eyes, but I said, "Well, good. I can't imagine trying to minister to these people with my home still standing."

I now have a shared experience with most of my town. It is easy to start up a conversation. We have a painful shared reality. I am able to have empathy for those around me. I am able to share my struggles and how my God has helped me through the process of trying to rebuild. Could it be that God uses our greatest heartbreaks to be the bridge that connects us to others? Could it be that God allows His leaders to suffer adversity so they can be relevant to those they serve? Could it be that our pain is the pathway to helping others?

Are you in the middle of pain? Are you in the middle of loss? A trial or tribulation? Be encouraged. The very difficulty that you are in could be the means by which God is most able to use you to bless others. Jesus demonstrated this in the purest sense. He gave up the beauty and glory of heaven to come down to this old, dirty planet and walk as we walk. To suffer as we suffer. Jesus intentionally came to us in order to have a shared experience with us. He relates to us as One who has walked a similar journey to ours. There is more depth and meaning when words come from someone who knows the intensity of the journey firsthand.

God has given our family the gift of relevance in a region that is experiencing loss and devastation due to fires. Galatians 6:2 reminds us, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (NIV). My prayer is that God will give you the courage to use your experiences of adversity to minister to those around you. **7**

---

**Delinda Hamilton** lives in Paradise, California, with her husband and three children. She is involved in lay ministries and helping to rebuild the burned-out town of Paradise.



# TIPS TO ~~SURVIVE~~ THRIVE



## 7 WAYS TO BLESS OTHERS

WITH COVID-19 STILL IN PROGRESS, every minister's spouse can find a way to be a blessing in the "new normal."

First, follow the guidelines given in your area, including wearing a mask, hand-washing, and social distancing. But especially, *guard your health*, since this is the very best safeguard against serious illness. Then pray and trust God to keep you safe.

Eat a healthful diet, avoiding sugars (especially sugary soda) and junk food. Stay well-hydrated, get daily exercise, get adequate sleep, and trust God to bless your health so that you may bless others. Blessing others brings deep satisfaction and happiness! How can we bless people?

### PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to do what you can do safely. Invite Him to be in your life so that others will feel His influence through you. Ask for the Spirit, and you will receive Him (James 4:2, last part; Luke 11:13).

### BOOST YOUR ATTITUDE

Have a positive and encouraging attitude. Display courage and faith in God and His plan, because *He does have a plan!* Let's fit into it!

### SPREAD JOY

Ask God to give you *joy* as you minister to your family, church members, and others. Joy is contagious: try to spread it.

### SHARE HOPE

Share some of the *many* Bible promises with people. Thus they will be aware that you have a relationship with the Almighty and are someone they can turn to.

### SUGGEST JOURNALING


Often, when you write about your problems, the Lord will impress you with wisdom for solving them.

### LISTEN

Let people talk about their individual struggles. We sometimes feel that we should share wisdom and advice, but much of the time, people just need to *talk*. Be the one who will listen.

### EMPATHIZE

When someone comes to you crying, ask God whether to say, "Don't cry; things will work out" or whether He wants you to cry with them.

"Christ did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 758). God has also prepared a special place where you can serve. Where? Right where you are. Ask yourself, "What can I do for Jesus?" Then ask *Him* the same question. He will show you. 

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

## How can we bless people?



# Change Happens...

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES of the COVID-19 pandemic was that, almost overnight, almost everything changed for almost everyone. How we work, shop, study, travel, visit, worship, and wash our hands may never be the same again. So it was quite natural that many of us felt disorientated and anxious for a while. Many people were surprised how tired they felt as their brains adapted to all the new rules, routines, and patterns of behavior. The virus has given us all a crash course in change management and tested our resilience and adaptability.

Ministry families encounter all kinds of changes in their lives. One of the hardest transitions we make is being asked to move churches when we love our current church district and we have no desire to move. It's also tough when the pastor's spouse has to leave an incredibly fulfilling work or study position and start all over again.

## PREDICTABLE OR UNEXPECTED?

Change is a natural part of creation. The seasons, clouds, trees, flowers all flow through the process of predictable change. Humans grow and develop and face countless changes every day.

When the changes are predictable, we need to prepare for them ahead of time. We put snow tires on our cars before winter, check that our teenagers have life skills before they leave home, and prepare financially for retirement.

It's also predictable that pastoral families will move regularly. After a few moves, my husband and I chose white furniture that could be mixed and matched into a "new" home more easily, and we kept our stored items in strong, stackable, and labeled boxes that were all ready to go.

Unexpected changes usually happen suddenly. Sometimes they are amazing and enjoyable, like a generous gift. But often they are negative changes. An unexpected move, an illness, a death, a local disaster, the loss of a job, a pandemic . . . These disruptions are more likely to make us feel disorientated because of the chaos that accompanies them and all the powerful emotions they evoke.

Here are seven practical tips for navigating change in your family's life:





# The coronavirus has given us all a crash course in change management.

## 1. PREPARE CHILDREN FOR CHANGE.

Help children to embrace change and see the exciting possibilities. Share how God has used changes in your life to help you grow and learn. Talk about some of the different ways He has helped you through those transitions. Use worship times to explore change in the lives of God's followers throughout the Bible. Talk honestly about the challenges change can bring, and let children know that you are always there to support them through the tough aspects of change in their lives and that God is there too (Deuteronomy 31:8).

## 2. RECOGNIZE THE LOSS.

Whenever there is change, there are losses, for you and for your children if they are living with you. When there are lots of losses at once, it can be helpful for each person to list them. Rate each loss on a scale of 1-10 so that you can begin to understand each other's pain and sadness. Suggest ways that your family members might help you to manage that loss more easily, such as praying with you and being understanding, supportive, and comforting.

## 3. MAKE A MAP.

When life is changing, try drawing a map together. Use a large sheet of flip chart paper or a roll of wallpaper. At the left side of the paper, draw, write, or map out previous changes that you have negotiated as a family, the challenges you faced, the ways in which God guided you and provided for you, the different things that helped you, and the pleasant surprises and gifts that came out of the change. Then continue the "road" to where you are now. Make a list of

the things you are most thankful for in your current situation, how you have grown spiritually, and the things that you would like to change about where you are now.

Then draw several roads into the future, describing different possible routes you might take. Explore the possibilities, gains, and challenges in each route. Pray together about the way forward. Be open and honest in your prayers about your feelings and thoughts, as God knows all about them anyway and cares deeply and compassionately for you, whatever you are experiencing (1 Peter 5:7).

## 4. SHARE YOUR FEELINGS.

Change can evoke sadness, excitement, fear, stress, hope, frustration, anger, curiosity, etc. Write each emotion on a different index card, with a simple description of the feeling. Take turns picking up a card that describes a feeling you have about the change. Talk about your experience of the feeling, when you are most likely and least likely to feel it, and how others can support you when you are feeling like that. Create a chalkboard where you can each write down how you are feeling today and how others can help you.

## 5. STAY CONNECTED.

Whenever change involves being separated from those we love, it's helpful to make a clear plan about how to stay connected after the move and to plan a return trip within a few months, if possible. Just having a future visit to look forward to can help to bridge the friendship gap, especially for children and teenagers, until fresh connections are made in their new place.

## 6. HOLD HOPE.

It can be hard to hold on to hope in the face of many difficult changes. Scatter lots of things to look forward to across your family calendar and involve your children and teenagers in the plans. Acts of kindness toward others, being thankful together, laughter, and walking in nature are helpful antidotes to the stress and anxiety of change.

## 7. JUST KEEP TALKING.

Several years ago my family experienced an unexpected and life-changing move. I would lose my job. We would have to tear our youngest, teenage son away from his friends and transplant him into a remote rural community with a vastly different culture. I raged and cried. I've moved many times and usually enjoy the new possibilities and challenges, but this time it was different. My husband listened to my frustration and tears and comforted me. Talking things through helped me to make sense of my thoughts and emotions, and when he understood how I was feeling, I felt less alone in my struggle.

Seven years after the most challenging change in my life, I looked back and saw how God had used those difficult years to shape me for an amazing purpose I had never imagined. That experience has given me the courage to face future changes with greater peace and hope. ■

---

*Karen Holford is a family therapist and the family ministries director for the Trans-European Division.*

# Giving Up MY PLANS

**TRUSTING IN GOD'S  
LEADING MIGHT BE ONE  
OF THE HARDEST THINGS  
TO DO—BUT IT ALSO  
BRINGS THE MOST  
PEACE AND JOY.**



IN 2016 MY HUSBAND, Pavel, and I were living in Kentucky, United States, as he was the pastor of the Lexington SDA Church. Our older son, Gabriel, lived in Wisconsin with his wife, Denisa, and our granddaughter Eva. They were seven hours away by car.

That summer Denisa was looking for a place to do her master's degree in nuclear physics. One of the few places she could choose was the University of Kentucky in Lexington, and we encouraged her to apply so they would be closer to us. However, her application was turned down.

We all talked together, and in our conversation Denisa pointed out, "We would love to be closer to you, but you just said in your sermon today that in all things in life we should depend on God. You said that we need to seek God's plan and trust in Him even when we don't understand what is going on, because 'all things work together for good to those who love God' (Romans 8:28). Shouldn't we pray about it?"

The four of us decided to pray for a week. The following Monday Denisa received an invitation to be part of a medical physics program in Pennsylvania. We were not very happy. Now they would move farther away instead of closer! But we accepted it as God's plan.

Then God's plan was revealed as, just a few months later, my husband was called to work in Maryland, much closer to Pennsylvania. What if our children had moved to Kentucky and then we had moved to Maryland? God knew the future and planned things better than we could have imagined.

## **A DAILY FAITH**

The Bible shares many stories of people of faith who depended on God, not only in the big decisions but also in their daily life. They walked with God. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, to name a few, continually followed God's plan and fully trusted in Him.

So many times we are tempted to stress out if things don't seem to go the way we think they should. We pray that God will help with *our* plans. However, the Bible clearly says that God has plans for us (Jeremiah 29:11). Therefore, we should pray for the fulfillment of *His* plans rather than ours, even though they may not make a lot of sense to us.

Ellen White writes, "When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. We may well have anxiety

and anticipate danger and loss, for it is certain to befall us. But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to follow God’s daily plans for our life, we must first be filled with God’s presence. We need to hear His voice, to be sensitive to His leading, to be continually connected, to know Him personally so much that we fully trust in Him. “Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God,” Ellen White writes. “We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart.”<sup>2</sup>

To seek God’s plans simply means that we need to give up our own. We cannot chase both God’s plan and our ideas and expect any progress and peace. Our plans are far from God’s, as far as heaven is from earth. Isaiah records the words of God: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways. . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways” (Isaiah 55:8, 9). If we try to love God yet try to follow our own will, we fail.

“Too many, in planning for a brilliant future, make an utter failure,” Ellen White warns. “Let God plan for you. . . . God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.”<sup>3</sup>

As we seek God’s leading, we then must give up our own agenda and surrender our plans to His. Ellen White shares this advice: “Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus

## We often don’t experience God’s power and leading because we don’t trust Him enough to let Him lead.

day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

### TRUST IN HIM

We often don’t experience God’s power and leading because we don’t trust Him enough to let Him lead. We usually feel the need to understand in order to obey. It may be hard, but trust in Him no matter what! Faith is not when you understand but when you trust although you don’t see. Remember, things didn’t go according to Joseph’s or Moses’ plans either. Yet they decided to trust in God.

Focusing on challenges causes stress and leads to hasty decisions. Keep your eyes continually on Him, repeat His promises, remember how He has led you in the past, and continually choose to trust in Him. “All things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28).

Our Lord and Savior had plenty of wisdom to plan His life; nevertheless, He daily followed His Father’s plan. Jesus was completely and continually dependent on the Father. He said that He did not do His own will or works but only the will and the works of the Father (John 6:38; 9:4).

“The Son of God was surrendered to the Father’s will, and dependent upon His power,” Ellen White shares. “So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God’s plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will.”<sup>5</sup>

It may seem stressful to surrender our plans and follow His leading, but when we do that we will never regret it. If God gave Jesus for us, how much more will He give us all other things that are necessary for our needs (Romans 8:32)?

Listen to these words of Ellen White: “If today we would take time to go to Jesus and tell Him our needs, we should not be disappointed; He would be at our right hand to help us.”<sup>6</sup> “[God] will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him.”<sup>7</sup>



# To seek God's plans means that we need to give up our own.

### BEING AN EXAMPLE

While it's essential for all of God's children to be continually connected and dependent on Him, it's absolutely vital for the leaders and their families to do that. How can we advise, teach, and support others unless we know God from our own experience? To have power in words, we must first practically experience trust in Him ourselves.

And this may be more difficult for leaders. It's most likely easier for leaders to find solutions and act based on their own wisdom and experience. Yet it is crucial to learn to wait upon the Lord, seek His wisdom, and follow Him and His plans in faith.

In our family my husband and I ideally plan things together. Yet he's often busy with meetings, preaching, or church activities, and I have to plan and act by myself. The tendency would be to do that based on my own wisdom. I constantly remind myself to follow God's plans and fully rely on Him.

Personally, I don't think we need to always know and understand His plans in order to follow them. That is no longer faith but science. I rather seek the assurance of His presence and make myself available to His leading and to service. I try to seek first His kingdom by praying, studying, and reflecting until I have the confidence that He is with me and have peace and joy. I have never

regretted this; all our best experiences with God have happened when we have decided to wait upon Him, put Him first, and trust in Him.

How would life be if we, as God's children, would daily and completely surrender and then depend on His leading in all we do? So much pain and unnecessary stress would be avoided. Even trials that, at that moment, may not make a lot of sense later prove to be a blessing.

You can never really trust a stranger, as trust grows from a strong and close relationship with someone. Therefore, instead of attempting to come up with solutions to your challenges, strengthen your relationship with God, follow Him, and decide to fully trust in Him. Only then can we experience His intervention, power, and peace. I value this wonderful promise: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

God is calling us to a higher experience with Him, to know, continually depend upon, and fully trust in Him. Only then can He lead us, transform us, and use us for His glory. Only then do we become more and more like Jesus. And that's the single way to prepare for heaven. It is for us to daily decide to have this experience, and we must do that today, every day. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6). <sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 479.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

---

**Daniela Goia** was born and raised in communist Romania. From a young age she dedicated her life to God and desired to serve Him. She has pursued education in psychology, sociology, and teaching and currently works for Adventist World Radio at the General Conference. She and her husband have always been dedicated to God's work and involved in the mission of the church. She says that in numerous situations her faith has been tested, and she has experienced God's power, love, and miraculous intervention.



# First Love

AS MY THREE CHILDREN ADVANCE from late teens into young adulthood, I am awakened to the meaning of “first love.” Oh, the texting, the l-o-o-o-n-g phone calls, the intentional creative dating and outings, the attention to personal grooming and appearance, the special romantic moments. It’s intense. It’s first love, designed and created that way.

As I watch them, I am grateful that this intensity will give way in time to grounded and rooted love. Love that is calmer and more stable. Love that has years and history and memories. Love that is best characterized by the words *enduring, committed, and realistic*.

Yet the reality is that this “love,” if unchecked and uncared for, can fall into disappointed love. No pursuing. No intentional creativity. No sweet, slowed down, thoughtful life-giving and love-giving words.

I have two challenges for each of you as a pastor’s spouse: The first challenge is to take a look at your marriage. How is your marriage? Are you being intentional and stirring up the coals of your first love with each other? Or is it time for a tune-up?

The second challenge is to take a look at your relationship with Jesus. How is your walk with the Lord? Do you remember your first love with Him?

My children’s energy in the area of romance has reminded me of the need to be intentional about my first loves—my first love with my life partner, Steve, and my first love with Jesus.

In Revelation 2:1-4 Jesus talks of all the good things we are doing—our work, our labor, our patience, our perseverance—but the one thing He reminds us of is that we have left our first love—Him. Clearly, we still

profess to love Him by all the things we are doing, but that lack of first love is disappointing Jesus.

Will you join me on this journey and discover your first love again? Not only in your marriage but also in your pursuit to love Jesus more? I have no doubt the journey will be rich indeed, full of romance and delight!

PS: To rekindle those first loves, I suggest reading (or rereading) the following: *Rekindling the Romance: Loving the Love of Your Life*, by Dennis and Barbara Rainey with Bob DeMoss; *Steps to Christ*, by Ellen White. ■

---

**Malinda Haley** is a pastor’s wife, mother, and nurse who lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, Steve, who is president of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference. The three teens mentioned here are young adults now!





# Less Can Be More

HOW TO FIND POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN HARD FINANCIAL TIMES



I WAS SHOCKED AND EMBARRASSED; I could not believe what had just happened! I had overdrawn my checking account by \$1,700, and my last check had been returned to the individual who attempted to cash it, marked “insufficient funds.” After reviewing my entries, I found that I had mistakenly added \$2,000 that I should have subtracted. My account held several thousand dollars less than I thought!

As a young pastoral family, we had realized in recent months that we were overextended. With the amount of our house payments escalating, we had more expenses every month than income, and our savings were nearly gone.

I thought I had the Lord figured out. Pray, work hard as a pastor, be faithful with tithes and offerings, and when you sell your home, He will bless you and help you build up financial security for the future. I had asked God for help

in buying and selling our first two homes and had made some money on each.

But as we moved to Denver, Colorado, I had prayed less and trusted more to my own experience as a home buyer. I really liked a home, paid more for it than was wise, and watched the amount of the payments escalate over time. As my wife, Janet, and I wanted her to stay home with our children, we realized we were in real financial trouble.

We decided to sell our home and prayed a lot. Sure enough, a buyer came along and made an offer from which we would make a little money. This offer gave me courage as I realized the checkbook error that day. However, when I arrived home, the buyer had left a message that the deal was off because he could not get a loan. My heart sank. “Help us, Lord!” I prayed.



## WHY, LORD?

We began to really pray and claim Bible promises. But the economy in that area had just taken a big hit, and houses were dropping in value. Months passed, and the Lord did not sell our home. One day, in a discouraged state of mind, I opened my Bible, asking the Lord to speak to me personally. The Lord led me to Psalm 37, and it has been a touchstone for me ever since.

- “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (verse 4).
- “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret [worry] because of him who prospers in his way” (verse 7).
- “But those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth” (verse 9).
- “A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked” (verse 16).
- “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed” (verses 25, 26).
- “The LORD knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied” (verses 18, 19).

I began to praise the Lord, thinking He was telling me He was going to sell our home soon, for a good price, and we would be OK. But that is not how it worked out. Instead, our home did not sell for nearly two years!

“Why aren’t You answering and saving us from losing all our savings and going into debt?” I cried out to God. Finally, I prayed, “It’s all Your money, and I surrender it all to You. I don’t want to run my finances anymore. Help us soon!”

## MOVING ON

After seven years in Colorado, I received a call to the Pennsylvania Conference as executive secretary and ministerial secretary. After much prayer and learning more about the conference needs there, Janet and I felt strongly that the Lord was calling us to move.

We rented a home there. That meant we had two house payments—we were in a financial hole for sure! However, we believed that God was leading us that way. We have found that often the way He leads when we really pray and claim His promises is not always the most humanly sensible, but He has His own plans and “a thousand ways to provide for us.”<sup>1</sup>

The week we finished packing and the truck was coming to move us, our house sold—but at the exact price we paid for it. That did not cover the expenses of selling it. This outcome was a great disappointment to our little family! We had prayed so much and yet were now without savings and even more deeply in debt. It seemed that Jesus had not answered our prayers.

Yet the timing of the sale was our precious Lord Jesus showing us He was with us and working things out for good eventually. All my life, He has shown up clearly for me just when the way seemed darkest. Looking back over all the trials, earnest prayer requests, and ways He has worked things out in our financial challenges, I am filled with joy and praise!

This wonderful promise in the book *The Ministry of Healing* has become one of my favorites: “In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings.”<sup>2</sup>

# My account held several thousand dollars less than I thought!

I began making brief miracle entries by Psalm 37 in the margins of my Bible: the cars people gave us, the money the Lord impressed friends to give us just when it was needed, the wonderful homes the Lord let us live in—often in beautiful rural places—the miracles in our conference financial crises, and more.

Our Lord is faithful! And He loves to have us learn to trust Him. Financial challenges can be great aids to our relationship with Jesus. I would much rather have this “faith equity” over the years, noted in Psalm 37 in my Bible, than great amounts of money in the bank!

## GOD’S PRESENCE BRINGS PEACE

The Lord really blessed me again when I became president of the Pennsylvania Conference. Mo Pelley was our treasurer. He loved Jesus with all his heart, was wise about finances and leadership, and had gained much experience as a missionary pilot in Africa for many years.

One day when our conference finances were looking especially bleak, he said to me in his wise and comforting way, “Jerry, in my experience with Jesus, I have found that when God’s people have the least resources, He gets the most glory!”

## Less Can Be More

When we stop trusting ourselves, throw ourselves on Jesus in desperation, put God in the center, and call on His name in prayer, He will meet our every need in Jesus (Philippians 4:19). He can surprise us with His creative ways that leave us just praising Him.

Mo and I found ourselves facing another round of major cuts and difficult financial challenges because the downward turn of the economy caused tithe and offerings to drop drastically. Things had already been “cut to the bone,” so any further budget reductions would be very painful.

Then early Sabbath morning on March 17, I awakened with knots in my stomach. I was overcome by anxiety because of the massive financial challenges. I could imagine people blaming this young conference president. I was worried about myself as well as the church!

My tossing and turning woke up Janet. Learning the problem, she said, “Let’s pray together.” We began to claim God’s promises in prayer. I was encouraged, and faith began to replace my anxiety. Then my older son, Tyson, woke up sick to his stomach, and it was clear that my family would not be able to join me at church that Sabbath, which was disappointing.

Our younger son, Zac, feeling the anxiety in the house, urged us to have morning worship together. I believe it was the Holy Spirit. I went to the bookcase to get the junior devotional book for the year. But as I did, I thought, *You know, the book this year is written more for kids older than Zac.* So I grabbed the previous year’s devotional book and opened it to March 17.



As we began to read, tears came to my eyes as the Lord spoke to me. It was a story about a boy named Alan and his dad, who saw an old man, nearly blind, tapping his cane on the street near the post office as he tried to mail a letter. They began to talk to him, offered him help, and discovered he was on his way to commit suicide. His wife had just ordered him out of the house, and his brother had disowned him over his drinking problem. He had been a respected state senator, but his life had fallen apart.

They took him and found him a place to stay, and eventually, he studied the Bible and was baptized. Wonderful story! However, the story itself was not what inspired me the most. God had taken me to the prior year’s devotional book, to March 17, and showed me a

story I had heard from my family all my years growing up—about how my brother Alan and our dad had met old Senator Prunty on his way to commit suicide! I did not know it was printed anywhere, but that day Jesus said to me, “Jerry, I know you, your brother, and dad, and while I cannot tell you just now all the ways I will fix the problems of Pennsylvania Conference, I am here with you and care infinitely for you and the conference.” I went to church filled with joy to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God performed so many miracles over the next few years in our conference by providing extra resources and taking our mission to higher growth than in many past years. He can do “exceedingly abundantly” above all that we can ever ask or think (Ephesians 3:20)!



## Financial challenges can be great aids to our relationship with Jesus.

good things happening there but also great financial, relational, and missional challenges.

All we knew to do was to urge all of God's people to see every difficulty, need, and financial impossibility as a call to prayer. Many prayer partners prayed for months and even years over specific needs. I will just briefly list some of the major challenges:

Monterey Bay Academy was \$2 million in debt and in danger of closing. But God, after much prayer, led us to the right leadership, and in less than five years, it was all paid off through their spiritual leadership and Christian principles of debt and interest reduction.<sup>3</sup>

The conference voted to close Soquel Camp Meeting and place the large grounds up for sale. But God led us to reverse those decisions, leading to it becoming a major engine of spiritual and financial growth. One answered prayer was the miracle of the camp-meeting evangelism offering going from \$100,000 to well over \$1 million a year for the next decade.

Camp Wawona in Yosemite National Park was zoned wrongly and under threat of being lost due to strong opposition from neighbors and private and governmental organizations. But God miraculously defeated those opposing forces, and now the camp is expanding and being redeveloped for even better ministries.

All of the facilities mentioned above also needed major renovations, and our schools needed educational scholarships. However, there was no money for those needs. But God led us to develop an organization of volunteers and a conference capital campaign, which led to members giving untold days of service and about \$11 million. Through years of consistent prayer, the conference experienced uncounted miracles. Money kept coming from members and church friends.

Our family was led by God to give in faith nearly half of our income to tithe, offerings, and outreaches when it seemed humanly impossible with a son in college and one in academy. But God blessed us in amazing ways to meet

To be at peace, we just need to know He is with us and promises to meet our real needs.

### WHEN MONEY GETS TIGHT

It has often been said, "When money gets tight, the family will fight!" However, as Scripture reveals, there is often a "But God . . ." when He intervenes. That has even been true in the church, and it is true for Christian families too!

I have found that the family or church that genuinely, earnestly prays together will stay together. Moreover, if they put Jesus at the center of their financial challenges, their true needs will be met, and they will thrive in finances and relationships. At first, it may be strange that I tie relationships to finances. But, as many of us can attest, relationships often are greatly strained when financial challenges arise. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

In 1995 Janet and I were called to the Central California Conference. I was to be president. Later she became the prayer and women's ministries leader. We discovered many wonderful people and very



## I prayed, “I don’t want to run my finances anymore.”

all our needs for the future. Even now, we cannot praise God enough for so many blessings, His continual care, and our sons and their families that live in sacrificial stewardship ways—that is worth more than any material blessings!

### FORWARD IN FAITH

The list could go on and on of miracles in personnel, relationships, ministries, outreach, and finances, and the uncounted blessings we have seen around the world in the past 10 years as we have traveled, teaching and ministering for the General Conference Ministerial Association. He works the same way all over the world when His people call much on His name and follow His leading!

“The means in our possession may not seem to be sufficient for the work; but if we will move forward in faith, believing in the all-sufficient power of God, abundant resources will open before us. If the work be of God, He Himself will provide the means for its accomplishment. . . . If we go to the Source of all strength, with our hands of faith outstretched to receive, we shall be sustained in our work, even under the most forbidding circumstances, and shall be enabled to give to others the bread of life.”<sup>4</sup>

This crisis time can be our “book of Acts” moment! Those early believers had little money, no church buildings, few pastors, and no big institutions, and they were being persecuted. But God turned the world upside down through them as they answered the call of Jesus in Acts 1:8, praying and

seeking the Holy Spirit until the baptism fell on them.

What can He do through us in this crucial time of earth’s history? We do not want to return to “normal” if that normal is Laodicea! This crisis time can move us into the last great explosion of Spirit-led revival and reformation leading to Christ’s second coming. As we face the upcoming financial challenges, instead of being anxious and depending on human methods and conventional wisdom, we need to follow the process they did over and over in the book of Acts.

In each challenge, persecution, or obstacle, the first Christians would gather together, pray, and fast. The Holy Spirit showed up, and the Word of God went forth in power. Some were converted, and others rejected the message. Nevertheless, the church grew dramatically, and the first Christians took the gospel to the whole world in about 25 years! Even though they had little money, no churches, few pastors, no institutions, and little education, God gave them all they needed and more, plus He got all the glory!

God is calling us to help Him write the last chapter of the book of Acts as He prepares for His coming so very soon. He is always able to make less become more!

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 481.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>3</sup> The financial help materials of both Larry Burkett and later Dave Ramsey were invaluable.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 371.



---

**Jerry Page** is the ministerial secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. This article originally appeared in *Ministry* magazine, July 2020.

## Dear Deborah,

*I'll admit it—I do not like change. Just about the time I find my “groove,” change is there once again to greet me with not-so-open arms. But, like most people, I adapt and overcome.*

*However, a recent change due to a conference relocation has left me with more questions than answers. After being a nurse for almost 30 years, I cannot find work in our new town. While this has never been a problem, I suspect it is my age that has a lot to do with the issue.*

*For the first time ever, I am almost jealous of my husband. Anytime we move, he of course has an instant job because he is the new incoming pastor for the district. But now I feel lost without my career, and I'm struggling with how to proceed while exhibiting enthusiasm at our new church home.*

*I didn't see this coming, and to be honest, I'm not my cheerful, bubbly self. My husband and adult children have dropped hints that maybe I need to talk to someone soon.*

*Really needing wisdom and direction,*

*Wandering Aimlessly*

## Dear Wandering Aimlessly,

Your situation is challenging but not impossible. Thankfully, it appears you have a good support system, which will be a blessing as you navigate the next steps. Depending on your situation, you might choose to call some Christian friends for encouragement, talk to another pastoral spouse whose advice you value, or make an appointment with a qualified counselor (especially if you may be depressed).

You can also be assured that God has the perfect plan for you and will reveal it right on time! Recently someone in a similar situation offered some suggestions that helped her find new purpose and meaning in her former career, plus she discovered she had some hidden talents. Below are some of those suggestions to implement during the waiting period.

- Review your résumé and polish it up.
- Explore your new town and look for opportunities to visit with people in the community while shopping or walking.
- Volunteer at various establishments in your new area.
- Take online courses to learn new skill sets and sharpen your educational baseline.
- Be open to broadening and expanding your horizons.
- Be prayerful that God has just the right employment opportunity for you!

Not only will the time go by faster, but your focus will be redirected, which will help you find purpose and direction. Also, the in-between time will allow you to get better acquainted with your new church family.

Make no mistake about it, God isn't finished with you. He has multiple options that will be the perfect fit for you and your family.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Prayerfully,

Deborah



# When the Dog Bites

*That the birds  
of worry and  
care fly over  
your head, this  
you cannot  
change, but  
that they build  
nests in your  
hair, this you  
can prevent.*

## CHINESE PROVERB

IT WAS AN ORDINARY-LOOKING LETTER with no return address. Full of questions, she opened it and began to read. Then she sat down in despair.

It had been an emotionally challenging and lonely week. Being a busy pastor's wife certainly had its ups and downs. This letter, full of harsh criticism of her, her husband's ministry, and their children, was a heavy blow that sent her already low spirits spinning further into a downward emotional free fall.

## A ROLLER COASTER RIDE

Life can be amazing and wonderful, and then things can go wrong, taking a serious "bite" out of our self-confidence, coping skills, joy, and even faith. We can all relate to some of these vicious hits to an otherwise peaceful, tranquil life:

- A sudden extra financial burden strikes the family.
- The children are involved in problems at school, or in the neighborhood, or at church.

- You lose your job or perhaps were overlooked for a more desirable position.
- A supportive relationship turns against you with criticism and faultfinding.
- The death of a much-loved friend or family member deeply affects you.
- Your recent health checkup revealed some worrisome news.
- You have had to move away from family and friends.

Often it seems that these big "bites" come when our emotional resources are already compromised by a buildup of lesser stresses. At such times, remembering "whiskers on kittens" and "bright copper kettles," as the song "My Favorite Things" suggests, can fall short of helping us not feel "so bad."

## THE BODY'S DEFENSE

Our bodies were designed to aid in handling the little crises of daily living, as well as the periodic major hits. Mild, daily stress can elicit a physiological response that heightens our awareness and sharpens our focus, thus



aiding in problem-solving. Once the situation is under control and the stressor resolved, the mind and body can relax. However, there can be occasions when there is a continuation of even these mild stressors without a break, such as work overload, a series of disappointments, and family challenges. This results in a buildup of tension and the corresponding wearing down of physical and emotional coping ability.

When the brain receives an actual or perceived threat of danger, an alert signal is sent to all body systems. Instantly a powerful chemical is released that stimulates the body to prepare for fight or flight. There is a corresponding rise in respiratory rate, heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tightness. We are ready to take action.

However, when we're faced with a major life-altering threat on top of a current buildup of ongoing stress, the physiological coping ability of body and brain can become overloaded and begin to show warning signs of emotional breakdown or the onset of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, and other problematic health conditions.

Big “bites” often come when our emotional resources are already compromised.

### **WARNING: STRESS!**

Be aware of these and other warning signs.

#### **Emotional and cognitive symptoms:**

1. A decrease of patience, mood control, and ability to focus—easily agitated
2. Low self-esteem accompanied by sadness and despair
3. Decreased interest in the normal activities of daily living such as getting out of bed in the morning, caring for personal hygiene, dressing appropriately, etc.
4. Feeling overwhelmed and incapable of managing responsibilities
5. Neglecting healthful lifestyle practices such as regular exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep
6. Unwillingness to associate with people socially, including attending church gatherings
7. Expressed decreased trust and faith in God

#### **Physical symptoms:**

1. Tiredness and low energy level
2. Headaches and muscle pains
3. Rapid pulse and chest pains
4. Increase in colds and infections
5. Inability to sleep or relax
6. Gastric symptoms, including upset stomach, diarrhea, constipation, and pain
7. Nervous behaviors such as nail biting and restless pacing

### **HELP IS AVAILABLE**

Anyone feeling overwhelmed by stress should talk to their doctor first. Symptoms of stress can occasionally be signs of other health problems. A good physical exam can help rule out contributing health conditions and lead to appropriate treatment. The doctor can also recommend a therapist or counselor if needed to aid in problem-solving and stress resolution.





## Our bodies were designed to aid in handling the little crises of daily living.

You can also help your mind and body handle stress better by following some of the suggestions below.

- **Eat good food.** Replace caffeine, sugars, and processed high-fat foods with a simple diet of plant-based whole foods such as fresh fruit, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and nuts.
- **Get moving.** A quick way to melt away tension and stress is by releasing those feel-good endorphins through exercise. Take a walk, join an exercise group or a gym, or go biking, and notice the difference in your mood. As much as possible get outside in the sunshine and fresh air when exercising.
- **Get adequate sleep.** Stress affects good sleep. Lack of enough sleep makes one ill-prepared to effectively handle stress. Getting enough daily exercise will aid in encouraging restful sleep. Try relaxation techniques and disconnect from technology as much as possible at least an hour before bedtime to help the body relax.
- **Take deep breaths.** We often forget how healing deep breathing can be to the body by decreasing blood pressure, slowing heart rate, and easing stress levels. Deep breathing several times daily can help you relax and stay calm.
- **Rely on your support system.** Many retreat into solitude when things go wrong. Leaning on friends and family instead can provide listening ears, comfort, reassurance, and acceptance, all of which greatly aid in encouraging emotional healing and a return to clearer thinking and normal living.

- **Get outside of yourself.** Volunteer. Join a craft or art class. Learn a new skill or musical instrument. Join a book club. Adopt a pet. Engaging in something new and different will increase your enjoyment of life while decreasing your focus on problems.
- **Count your blessings.** Changing the focus of your thoughts from all that has gone wrong to what is right and positive in life can encourage a more balanced thinking process. Ellen White said, "Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251). When we focus our thoughts on being thankful, we open our hearts to heaven's peace provided by a loving Creator.

### LAST WORDS

Dealing with stress is a normal part of life. However, even simple annoyances can build up when our defenses are compromised by such things as lack of sleep, loneliness, or episodes of perceived failure. Knowing the warning signs, keeping focused on healthful lifestyle habits, leaning on our support system, and maintaining faith in a loving heavenly Father will lighten the load and lead forward toward joy, peace, and a healed spirit.

---

*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.*



# Special Quotes

Could Christians realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them.

*Prophets and Kings*, p. 576

To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest. They will look back with thankfulness upon the darkest part of their way. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly." 2 Peter 2:9. From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience.

*The Desire of Ages*, p. 528

All that has perplexed us in the providences of God will in the world to come be made plain. The things hard to be understood will then find explanation. The mysteries of grace will unfold before us. Where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken promises, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony.

We shall know that infinite love ordered the experiences that seemed most trying.

*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 286

To know Jesus requires a change of heart. No unconverted person, in his natural state of depravity, loves Christ. A love of Jesus is the first result of conversion. The proof of this love is given: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

*Daughters of Grace*, p. 240

Christ's coming was at a time of intense worldliness. Men were subordinating the eternal to the temporal, the claims of the future to the affairs of the present. They were mistaking phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms. They did not by faith behold the unseen world. Satan presented before them the things of this life as all-attractive and all-absorbing, and they gave heed to his temptations. Christ came to change this order of things. He sought to break the spell by which men were infatuated and ensnared. In His teaching He sought to adjust the claims of heaven and earth, to turn men's thoughts from the present to the future. From their pursuit of the things of time, He called them to make provision for eternity.

*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 366





# ON THE MOVE!



## LIVING IN A PASTOR'S FAMILY MEANS

that you often move around and live in different cities and towns. Sometimes this can be fun because you can explore all kinds of new places and make new friends. Sometimes it can be tough because you have to leave your home, your school, and your friends and start all over again as a new kid in town. The wonderful thing is that God is with us wherever we go. He cares about us, He understands when we feel sad about leaving our friends and starting over again, and He never stops loving us. In Deuteronomy 31:8 it says, "And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

## BIBLE MOVERS

Lots of people moved in the Bible. Here are just a few of the people who moved away from home. Can you find out where they went?

Terah, Abram and Sarai, and Lot moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 11:31).

Rebekah moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 24).

Jacob moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 28:10).

Joseph (Jacob's son) moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 37).

Ruth and Naomi moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Ruth 1:22).

Daniel and his friends moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Daniel 1).

Esther moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Esther 2:7, 8).

Mary and Joseph moved from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and later to \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 2).

## PRAYING FOR YOUR NEXT HOME

What would you like to pray about for your next home? Your new friends? Your next church? Even if your family isn't planning a move, you can still pray about the next place that God is preparing for your family. Talk about your hopes and dreams for your next move and write a prayer together. Fold a sheet of paper in half like a greeting card. Cut the top of the card into a roof shape so it looks like a house. Write your prayer inside the house and keep it safe. Take out your prayer occasionally and pray together with your family about your next move.





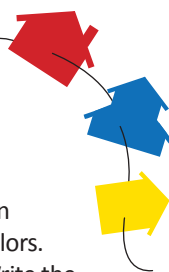
## GIFTS EVERYWHERE!

Wherever we live, there are special people to love, places that are fun to visit, people who need to know God's love, and all kinds of great things to make life happy! Take a sheet of paper for each place where you have lived. Write the name of the town or city at the top of the paper or draw a picture of your home. Then think of all the wonderful people you knew, what you enjoyed about going to church, some of the fun memories you made in that place, and anything else you want to thank God for. Do this for each place you've lived, even if you've stayed in only one town. Wherever we live, God surrounds us with amazing gifts to discover and enjoy. I wonder what amazing surprises He's preparing for you in the next place you'll live!

## JESUS: HOME BUILDER

Read John 14:1-3. Right now, Jesus is in heaven making new homes for His friends. I imagine that He knows all of our favorite things, and He's busy creating thousands of unique rooms to fit each one of us. Heaven is going to be so wonderful that we can't begin to imagine it! But we can still wonder what our personalized heavenly home might be like. One of my friends loves bears, and she imagines that Jesus will put a real cuddly bear in her room to snuggle whenever she wants a hug. Another friend loves his treehouse, and he imagines his heavenly home might be up a tree. Share some of your creative ideas together. Pray, thanking Jesus for making a special place for us that is far beyond anything we can imagine on earth!

## WORDS ON THE STREET



Cut out lots of paper houses in different shapes, sizes, and colors. Lay them out in a long row. Write the words of John 14:1-3 on different houses. Then shuffle up the shapes and see how quickly you can arrange them in the correct order of the Bible passage. When you've learned the verses, decorate the houses and use them to create a garland for your home.

## GOD'S PROMISE



Cut a sheet of card stock into the shape of a house. Write the words of Deuteronomy 31:8 on the house. Decorate the shape in any way you like. Punch a hole in the top and tie yarn or ribbon to make a hanging loop. Display your house to remind you that God is with you wherever you go.

## MOVING GIFT



Do you know someone who's moving? Make a moving gift for them. Find an attractive box or bag and include some of these: a photo of you with an encouraging message on the back; something small for their new room; a large card or notebook filled with positive messages from their friends; something to remind them of a good time with you, such as a treat you both enjoyed or a small game you played together; some welcome

balloons for them to blow up when they arrive; a packet of tissues (just in case); a copy of Deuteronomy 31:8 decorated by you and put into a frame or made into a house hanger like the one described under the title "God's Promise"; a jar of earth from their garden so they will have a little piece of your town in their new place; a guidebook filled with great things for kids to do in their new area, city, or state (or write to the tourist office

in their new location and request some brochures); a voucher for their family to have a meal out in their new location; and anything else they might like. Ask your parents to help you write a prayer for your friend's family. Pray that they will soon settle and find peace, happiness, and friendship in their new place. Pop this prayer into the gift bag. Invite them over for a meal before they leave, have a special time of prayer for them, and give them the gift bag.



# MOVING FEELINGS



Moving away from home can cause all kinds of feelings. But Jesus cares about all of our emotions, and He understands when we feel sad, afraid, excited, or stressed. Read Matthew 11:28, 29. Take a large sheet of paper. In the middle of the paper draw a big heart, and then divide the heart into four quarters. In each quarter write one of the following: "I am feeling sad about moving because . . ."; "I am feeling excited about moving because . . ."; I am afraid or worried about moving because . . ."; and "I am feeling stressed about moving because . . ." Write down some of your ideas and share them with your parents. Tell them how they can help you when you feel sad, worried, afraid, or stressed by everything you have to do. Also, tell them what you're excited about



## GET PACKING!

One of my friends lived in a country troubled by war. Sometimes her family had to move very quickly to a new town to stay safe. She told me that all you can really own in the world is whatever you can carry in two grocery sacks, because that was all she could take with her. Give every person in your family two grocery sacks and ask them to choose what they would carry with them to a new place if that was all they could take. Set a timer for 30 minutes and get packing! When the time is up, look at what each person has packed. Tell each other why you chose the things in your bag. What would be good about owning only a few things? What would be difficult? Thank God that, at the moment, you can usually take everything you need and want with you when you move.



and how they can help you enjoy moving to a new place. When we understand each other's feelings, we can comfort, encourage, and help one another. And that's good for everybody in the family.

**Karen Holford** is the family ministries director for the Trans-European Division. She has lived in 20 different homes in her life.



## East-Central Africa Division

In February 2020, Uganda Union Shepherdesses held a continuing education graduation. A total of 160 graduated on this special day.



*Some of the graduates in Uganda proudly display certificates.*

*Ministerial spouses in Uganda celebrate their continuing education.*

Musa and Winfrida Mitekaro visited three sites in Uganda where pastors' kids (PKs) were the preachers to celebrate ECD Mission Extravaganza. Three young men had a team of PKs supporting them in different meeting activities. We praise God for many souls that received Christ as their personal Savior as a result of their hard work.



*Three young men with a team of PKs led out in meeting activities.*

Shepherdesses in Southern Tanzania Union are building a church for 25 new believers who accepted Jesus as their personal Savior last year.



*Ministerial spouses built a new church in Tanzania.*



## Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Thandi Papu from Cape Conference reports that they held a virtual Sherpy (nickname for their Shepherdess group) meeting. She says, "God remains faithful during our lockdown, and we thank Him for all His providences. God's work continues in a very special way online. It's amazing that as a church we are able to connect with backsliders, relatives, and friends who are not with us in our faith. We are receiving good, positive feedback. We are on our knees for COVID-19. We plead for God's mercy."

*Thandi Papu held virtual meetings to spend time in prayer.*





## Southern Asia Division



Ministerial spouses held evangelistic meetings in a mainly Hindu area in Batanagar, Kolkata, and did presentations on health.



Sixty-six ministerial spouses met at the Western India Union office for meetings. They had seminars on women's health, how to reach women for Jesus, and prayer life.



South-Central India Union ministerial spouses met in Srirangapatna. The theme was "Leading and Loving It."



Southwest India Union ministerial spouses met at the SDA church in Thrissur. Topics presented were the steps of Jesus prayer, when your husband is ridiculed, and Jesus' intercession for His disciples.



The South-Central India Union also helped ministerial spouses with petty shops so they can generate income for their families.



Southeast India Union ministerial spouses had a meeting at Mount Carmel Adventist Center in Erode with the theme "Awake, Arise, and Shine."



Ministerial spouses in Northern India Union gathered at the SDA School in Khunti. They were encouraged in their prayer life and role as a pastor's spouse.



The East Central India Union also has a goat project to help ministerial spouses generate income.



South-Central India Union pastors' spouses were given 12 goats for income generating.



Western India Union ministerial spouses met at Central Maharashtra Conference and enjoyed presentations on Jesus' method of prayer, biblical studies, and health.

# West-Central Africa Division



Cameroon Union Mission held a three-day retreat for the new ministerial spouses this past August.




A donation was given to the Cameroon ministerial widows whose husbands died but were not vested.



Donations were also made to our ministerial orphan in Mid-Central Ghana Conference, the son of late Pastor and Mrs. Sarpong.







April 3, 2021  
July 3, 2021  
October 2, 2021  
January 2, 2022

# WORLD CHURCH DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

Find the program materials at  
[revivalandreformation.org/prayerdays](https://revivalandreformation.org/prayerdays)

Revival  
& REFORMATION

