

# THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

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*Flourishing*  
IN THE NEW NORMAL



## ON THE COVER

This past year has been tough. No matter where you live, you have faced challenges. Perhaps they were caused by COVID-19, political unrest, family conflicts, or spiritual struggles. You may wonder, *Is this the new normal? Do I have to get used to living this way?* Jesus assured us, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (1 John 16:33, NIV). Thanks to Jesus, whatever our current circumstances, they are not permanent! So, what do we do until we reach our permanent "new normal" in heaven? This issue has inspiring stories and practical articles to help you flourish in the time and place in which you find yourself right now.



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# Stay on the Wall

A passenger in a taxi wanted to ask the driver a question. The passenger gently tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention. The driver screamed, lost control of the cab, nearly hit a bus, drove up over the curb, and stopped just inches from a large plate glass window.

For a few moments everything was silent in the cab. Then the shaking driver said, "Are you OK? I'm so sorry, but you scared the daylight out of me."

The badly shaken passenger apologized to the driver and said, "I didn't realize that a mere tap on the shoulder would startle someone so badly."

The driver replied, "No, no, I'm the one who is sorry. It's entirely my fault. Today is my very first day driving a cab. I've been driving a hearse for 25 years."

Fear is a prime human emotion implanted in our system by the Creator. It can present negative reactions with debilitating effects or be a positive motivating force to success. In the well-known story of Rahab, Scripture says that the entire city of Jericho was scared: "a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you" (Joshua 2:9, NIV). This Canaanite city had heard of the power of the God of Israel, and instead of surrendering themselves before Him, they trembled with fear. This was a negative reactive fear because they did not know the true character of God.

Joshua did not need to send the spies to check the land; God had already given it to them. However, true to His loving and merciful character, God allowed the inhabitants of this city another opportunity for repentance. From a distance, while the Israelites camped by the Jordan River, Jericho could see the pillar of fire at night and the cloud to protect them during the day. They had seen the manna fall. They knew the power of the God of Israel.

Ellen White shares: "The inhabitants of Canaan had been granted ample opportunity for repentance. Forty years before, the opening of the Red Sea and the judgments upon Egypt had testified to the supreme power of the God of Israel. And now the overthrow of the kings of Midian, of Gilead and Bashan, had further shown that Jehovah was above all gods. . . . All these events were known to the inhabitants of Jericho, and there were many who shared Rahab's conviction, though they refused to obey it, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, 'is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath'" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 492).

## ONE REQUEST

The spies asked Rahab to help them escape, and she did to the best of her abilities. One thing she asked in return—one very important thing. She could have asked for gold to be financially set for life. Israel had plenty of it. She could have asked for land, a prime asset, especially for a single-labeled woman of her time. She could have escaped and saved her own life, but she made this request: "Swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped



## Stay on the Wall

you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families" (Joshua 2:12, 13, NLT). Of all the things she could have asked for, the only thing that was of great value to her was her family and their salvation.

The Scriptures tell what happened: "Joshua said to the two spies, 'Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family.' The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel" (Joshua 6:22, 23, NLT). And for this very important reason *she stayed on the wall*.

Rahab the prostitute became Rahab the intercessor. Regardless of her past choices and mistakes, regardless of her failures and fears, she got hold of the promises, believed in the God of Israel, and saw her life transformed. In fact, she ended up in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).

We are living again on the borders of the Jordan River, very close to the heavenly Canaan. God is sending you and me to intercede on behalf of our families. We are to put that scarlet cord on the windows of our homes. This cord represents commitment and repentance, salvation and eternal life.

Rahab's scarlet cord was so strong that all of her family used it to get out of the destruction of Jericho. In the midst of the fear we are experiencing today, God is calling us to stay on the wall because "you will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!" Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you" (1 Chronicles 20:17). J

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# WORLD CHURCH DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING



April 3, 2021  
July 3, 2021  
October 2, 2021  
January 1, 2022

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









# *Special Quotes*

There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.

*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 458

When Christ bowed on the banks of Jordan after His baptism and offered up prayer in behalf of humanity, the heavens were opened; and the Spirit of God, like a dove of burnished gold, encircled the form of the Saviour; and a voice came from heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What significance does this have for you? It says that heaven is open to your prayers. It says that you are accepted in the Beloved. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burden at the Saviour's feet. It says that Christ has encircled the race with His human arm, and with His divine arm He has grasped the throne of the Infinite and united man with God, and earth with heaven.

The prayers of Christian mothers are not disregarded by the Father of all, who sent His Son to the earth to ransom a people for Himself. He will not turn away your petitions and leave you and yours to the buffetings of Satan in the great day of final conflict. It is for you to work with simplicity and faithfulness, and God will establish the work of your hands.

*Child Guidance*, p. 526

When we give ourselves unreservedly to the Lord, the simple, commonplace duties of home life will be seen in their true importance, and we shall perform them in accordance with the will of God. We are to be vigilant, watching for the coming of the Son of man; and we must also be diligent; working as well as waiting is required; there must be a union of the two. This will balance the Christian character, making it well developed, symmetrical. We should not feel that we are to neglect everything else, and give ourselves up to meditation, study, or prayer; neither are we to be full of bustle and hurry and work, to the neglect of personal piety. Waiting and watching and working are to be blended. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

*The Adventist Home*, p. 23



# UPSIDE DOWN

**HOW WOULD I GET OUT OF THIS  
AWKWARD POSITION?**

MY BROTHER, CAREY, raced to the airport. I'd had a pleasant visit with him in Texas and now had to catch my flight back home to California. But as I looked at the time, I realized that missing my plane was a real possibility.

We arrived with little time to spare. Determined to fight to the end, I made the final assault with prayer. I silently prayed that security wasn't crowded. Or that the plane was delayed. Or that rebooking would go smoothly. I wanted to touch all the bases.

I had two options for getting upstairs to the ticket area: the elevator and the escalator. I chose the moving stairs. With my suitcase on the step behind me, my one hand firmly holding the handle and the other on the railing, I started up.

All went well for about five seconds. The heavy piece of luggage stood firm, but I didn't. I fell backward onto the overstuffed suitcase. It fell backward too. I was grateful for a soft landing. However, I imagined a loud announcement: "Pileup at American Airlines ticket area."

Slowly, I continued the journey to the top. Riding feet first, I assessed the situation. Actually, I was quite comfortable. But I knew I would not be able to get up from where I had fallen on my suitcase.

Have you ever been in a situation in which you knew there was no way to recover? If you're in a public place, it's even worse.

When I reached the top of the escalator, the moving stairs kept moving, but I didn't. As I lay there on my back, my suitcase attempted to make a landing but kept hitting my head as each stair flattened to pass through the machine. To add to the chaos, one of the escalator's metal stairs grabbed my coat sleeve and attempted to devour my arm. Soon my arm was cut and bleeding.

It seemed like forever before assistance arrived. A man leaned down and asked, "Do you need help?" That was the understatement of the century!

A lone tear rolled down my cheek. I didn't have the energy to be hysterical. As shock invaded my brain, I was pulled onto the carpet past the moving stairs.

Two airline employees rushed over with a wheelchair and asked for the contact information of my next of kin. My hair dripped with sweat, and I wanted to throw up. A trash can was pushed under my chin and a cold compress—a bottle of cold water wrapped in paper—was placed on my forehead. Someone worked to bandage the cut on my arm.

Carey always stays near the airport until the plane takes off, so he was close by. When he got the call about my mishap, he came back to the airport. When I saw him, two things happened: I started to cry, and he discovered that I was at the wrong airline.

## RAW EMOTIONS

That day I found myself upside down. But some days I am also upside down in my relationship with Jesus and others in my life. And when a problem or situation or person is consuming my mind, categories of emotions control my thoughts, and my attitudes seep out of my mouth. Here are some examples:

When I am angry: Nagging problems that seem to have no solutions make me feel that all is hopeless. I think, *It's not fair*.

When I am tired: I resent my responsibilities and schedules, and the idea of rest is a foreign language.

When I am hurt: Criticism cuts to my core. I argue, *I am doing the best I can*.

When I am jealous: Lives of others look better than mine—spouse, money, children. The list goes on.

When I think Jesus has let me down: My attitudes and complaints cloud any hope or joy and distance me from my Savior. In time, I find a quiet place for a one-way conversation—me complaining and explaining the unfairness in my life to God. I talk out loud.

When I am ready, Jesus nudges me to my Bible. And, as I sense His presence, my heart opens to my Savior.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Your issue is with God—take it to Him. “Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (Psalm 62:8).\*

You are safe inside God’s timing—wait and listen for it. “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

While God is rebuilding, restoring, and recreating your life, do your part—get about the business of living the best life under the circumstances. “Being


## *Have you ever been in a situation in which you knew there was no way to recover?*

strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father” (Colossians 1:11, 12).

God works within His system—stay in it. “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust’” (Psalm 91:1, 2).

Praise Him for the promises and solutions—and choose to accept them. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

Keep a daily record. Reading the history of experiences and answered prayers reminds us of Jesus’ leading and grows our faith and assurance. Also, have a prayer partner, someone who is in love with Jesus and is confidential. God will lead you to the right person.

There are times I relapse and dwell on my personal challenges. Still, God is so faithful and patient. His promises are sure. “Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are His house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory” (Hebrews 3:6). 

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\* All Bible texts are from the New International Version.

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# THEY *need* YOU

## CREATIVE WAYS TO REACH OUT TO A PANDEMIC-STRESSED WORLD

“THE TOP ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BIBLE on Google Play and App Store was installed almost two million times, the highest amount ever recorded for March, according to Appfigures. Similarly, one of the UK’s largest online Christian bookstores, Eden, has seen physical Bible sales rise by 55 percent in April [2020], while Google searches for ‘prayer’ and ‘Christianity’ have skyrocketed.”<sup>1</sup>

Unprecedented spiritual interest? Yes.<sup>2</sup>

Amazing Facts, a supporting media ministry of the Adventist church, reported explosive growth in Bible School enrollments in the past year, with more than double the usual number of enrollments by mail and nine times more online.<sup>3</sup>

Since world circumstances have thrown us into a new normal, we all have been forced to adjust, and God has led people to make full use of this upturn in religious interest. During this time of social distancing, people are finding new avenues for touching lives—and even teens and children are grabbing a part of the action.

### NEW APPROACHES

Early after the pandemic broke, I chanced upon a social media post by a pastor’s wife. It showed a photo of her two children, along with the rest of the family, singing outside a window—the window of someone they could no longer visit face-to-face. I loved how they had found a new way to spread joy to a senior citizen.

Around the same time, when many people needed groceries, a forward-thinking youth pastor in our area had the idea of meeting real needs by hosting a grocery drive-through on an academy campus. Adults and teens from area churches streamed onto the campus. Masks and gloves on, they stuffed hundreds of food bags with GLOW tracts before opening the gates to a long line of cars. Aside from helping 1,000 appreciative families, members from different area churches developed a sense of unity as they served side by side.

Something unusual happened when a group of student literature evangelists went door to door recently, wearing masks and staying six feet back from the door. A shy young girl was showing *The Great Controversy* magabook when the man at the door saw one of the pictures and said, “Wait, is that Martin Luther?” It was indeed Luther. He went to get some money, presumably for the book, and returned with two stacks of \$100 bills totaling \$2,000—he wanted his whole community to have the chance to read a book that important!

Some years ago I received the best birthday present ever—one of my daughters was born on my birthday. This year we decided to celebrate our birthday by giving out 67 mini-gifts, that being the sum of our combined ages. Inspired by a friend who did this, I bought some gift cards for a fast-food chain and made packages using tiny zippered plastic bags. We filled them with a gift card, a small spiritual book, and a note about how this book would give hope. We stuffed other bags with a health GLOW tract, a little card with 3 John 2 on it, and a cough drop.



*“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” Romans 13:11*

As we walked up to people who were out and about, we smiled and said, “Hi, it’s my birthday today, and I have a gift for you.” Everyone smiled back, wishing us a happy birthday. We left some of the bags on car windshields and gave out some at a gas station. Not one person refused our gifts.

A woman who was putting her toddler into her not-so-new-looking car was glad to receive the gift card and book and commended my daughter for what she was doing. A few minutes later she called us back, as she was a new Christian and wanted to ask a question about prophecy. After we talked and prayed together, she asked how she could keep in touch, and we pointed her to the e-mail address on the little card in the bag.

This outreach turned out to be the highlight of our day, and we came back feeling so happy. Valentine’s Day, Christmas, and other holidays are easy times to give out little books, tracts, or even Bible verse cards related to that holiday’s theme.

As an alternative to trick-or-treating, we invited a few families for an outreach. Meeting at a park, we put the children’s GLOW tract “How Not to Be Scared” in small bags with a Bible verse card and a yellow emoji bouncy ball. People were happy for us to give them to their kids. One man said, “I agree with what you’re doing.” Check out this new website that is chockablock full of outreach ideas for all ages: [findingjoy4eternity.com](http://findingjoy4eternity.com).

### KEEP IN TOUCH

What if you would rather do something from home, or if Sabbath afternoons seem long? GLOW posted the “GLOW Viral Challenge” a few months ago, and our whole family had fun doing it. What does it look like?

(1) Choose the address of someone you don’t know by looking in a phone book or finding a random address in a map program on your phone. (2) Write a handwritten letter or card of encouragement to the person at that address. (3) Enclose three GLOW tracts or other literature. (4) Mail the letter and pray! (5) Challenge friends to do likewise. There may not be personal contact, but a whole lot of love is dispersed through a handwritten letter, evidenced by the fact that as soon as one of our neighbors heard we were doing this, he said he wanted one too.

It pays to keep in touch. Years ago the Lord gave Melissa\* a chance to befriend Isabel,\* who lived a roller-coaster life, but popped into church occasionally. During COVID-19 Isabel told Melissa that she really wanted to have Jesus in her life. Instead of conducting once-a-week traditional in-home Bible studies, which had rarely worked anyway due to Isabel’s erratic schedule, Melissa had the thought of getting two copies of the workbook *40 Days: Prayers and Devotions to Revive Your Experience With God*, one for each of them.

They started to meet by phone at 7:00 on weekday mornings to discuss the short lessons and to pray together. Isabel grew spiritually, and they witnessed amazing answers to prayer. A few months later Isabel’s daughter and her whole family took their stand for Jesus and were baptized in their pool at home.

What about sharing on social media? Why not post devotional thoughts a few times a week, adding an attractive picture? Also, [glowonline.org/digital](http://glowonline.org/digital) provides an easy way to share GLOW digitally, and tracts are available in many languages.

These stories barely begin to cover all the ideas for sharing the love of Jesus in a pandemic-shocked, spiritually starving world. But they inspire me and give glimpses of ways to share hope. Let’s take hold of the opportunities nearest us, making the most of this crisis—with Jesus. J

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<sup>1</sup> [newstatesman.com/politics/religion/2020/04/how-coronavirus-leading-religious-revival](http://newstatesman.com/politics/religion/2020/04/how-coronavirus-leading-religious-revival).

<sup>2</sup> [cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2020/04/googling-prayer-has-skyrocketed-with-coronavirus-spread-expert-says/](http://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2020/04/googling-prayer-has-skyrocketed-with-coronavirus-spread-expert-says/).

<sup>3</sup> [amazingfacts.org/news-and-features/news/item/id/24748/t/amid-lockdown--amazing-facts-bible-school-records-explosive-growth](http://amazingfacts.org/news-and-features/news/item/id/24748/t/amid-lockdown--amazing-facts-bible-school-records-explosive-growth).

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\*Not their real names.

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# Oversized Shoes

**WHEN YOU WALK WITH GOD, YOU  
CAN STEP FORWARD CONFIDENTLY.**

WHEN MY SONS WERE LITTLE BOYS, still learning to walk independently, they loved to slip into their dad's shoes, clasp their hands in mine or those of any adult around, and begin to walk. With their tiny feet in oversized shoes, they knew it was not safe to walk alone. To avoid falling down and hurting themselves, they totally depended on an adult's leadership and support.

When I reflect on this illustration, I realize what it means to be in a personal relationship with God. It is from this relationship that we develop trust in His leadership and support because, in our spiritual journey, walking alone is never safe.

For all of us who have been called to serve in His vineyard in partnership with our spouses, this fact should be clear: we are wearing oversized shoes! Our spiritual and physical strength to carry this work independently is inadequate. The mission and vision belong to Him (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 13:47; 1:8). He is the facilitator of strength, means, wisdom, talents, gifts, protection, and health. The people we minister to are His, and even the message we proclaim belongs to Him. Ellen White affirms this: "All heaven is interested in this work that God's messengers are carrying forward in the world, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This is a great work, brethren and sisters, and we should humble ourselves daily before God, and not feel that our wisdom is perfect."<sup>1</sup>

Serving Him is not about where we come from or our giftedness, education, eloquence, knowledge, leadership skills, economic status, or even dedication to service. It is about who He is in our lives and His mission to the world He loves so much. Ellen White says: "In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess learning or eloquence or worldly wealth. He asks: 'Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?'"<sup>2</sup>

When God's servants take pride and glory in whatever achievement they get in ministry, they demonstrate that they have forgotten whose shoes they are wearing. They do not give credit to the invisible hand that led them to victories and the Spirit of God that has been always available to convict sinners. The Spirit of Prophecy admonishes God's servants "to ascribe glory, honor, and praise to Him who is above all and over all."<sup>3</sup>

At times some may feel unprepared to heed the call because they feel a sense of inadequacy and fear about the responsibilities assigned to them. Here we have good news! In the life of ministry, as soon as you experience a sense of inadequacy and feel that you do not possess enough skills to perform the work assigned to you, what you need to do is not reject the assignment but surrender to the owner of the mission!

## **WALKING WITH JESUS**

I still remember vividly when I was asked to serve at the union office as director of Sabbath School, women's, and children's ministries. Deep down in my heart I did not feel like it was God calling me because I was convinced He knew that I was



used to the university setting and was not courageous enough for this. I feared church members and other church leaders, and I felt completely incompetent and unprepared to take the task.

While I was in this state, I felt so blank in my brain—even the little things I knew about the three ministries disappeared from my memory. I had two months before I needed to report to my new office, and for the first month I could not find any idea of how I would run the three departments. Soon I was left with only one month before beginning my responsibilities.

One day early in the morning, I was ready to do my devotions. At the same time I was still wondering what I should do regarding my new assignment. A soft voice whispered in my heart, saying, “I understand you are not able, but why don’t you try to pray about it? Ask, and it shall be given unto you (Matthew 7:7), for things which are impossible with humans are possible with God (Luke 18:27).”

The voice was so vivid that I could not resist it. In my state of helplessness, I cried to God, “Lord, You know I never wrote an application letter for this assignment. It has come by surprise. You must have something to do with this! Therefore, if You do not help me, I have nothing to offer to Your people. Please give me ideas, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and give me the courage, confidence, and assurance that You are with me.”


I repeated the same prayer for the whole week. Then I started hearing the words of Isaiah 41:10 ringing in my mind: “Fear not, for I am with you . . . I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Yes, I was wearing oversized shoes, but He was going to uphold me with His righteous right hand and strengthen me; what a promise! My husband became another tool in God’s hand for me. He kept on encouraging me. Based on his experience, he told me, “You have nothing to fear because that is not your business—it is God’s business. What you need is just to surrender to His will, and He will do the rest.”

When the week was over, I took my computer and started drafting a five-year plan. To my amazement, ideas started flooding my mind, and this gave me assurance that God was truly with me. He just needed my willingness to serve, and He would fix all the rest. Indeed, God was faithful. I never ran short of new ideas for ministry for the entire five years—my only limits were time and funds.

After this experience, I promised God that wherever He sends us (my husband and me), I will never murmur because He has proved His faithfulness to me.

Maybe you are going through tough times. You might feel overwhelmed with the responsibilities assigned to you and may be playing with the idea of quitting those tasks. I don’t intend to tell you that this work is easy. But I know victory is assured. Please be encouraged by these words of Ellen White: “He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men [and women] to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.”<sup>4</sup>

Personally, I would not trade partnership with Christ for anything, because I have the assurance that He will never let His work (and workers) down. As long as I am walking in His shoes, I am always assured of His guidance and leadership. 

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<sup>1</sup> *The Review and Herald*, July 12, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 330.

<sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

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# IS EVERYTHING OK?

## HELPING CHILDREN WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING ONE for children as well as adults. Isolation, uncertainty, fear, illness, loss of loved ones, and disrupted routines in the home, school, work, and church have all taken their toll. These stressors have an impact on physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being, especially with children.

Some families and children seem to have flourished from being at home, having a slower pace of life, spending time in nature, and growing spiritually closer as a family. And, for all kinds of reasons, others have struggled. Whether you are a concerned parent, grandparent, friend, neighbor, teacher, or pastor, you might be wondering about a child's mental health, praying for them, and looking for ways to help.

### IDENTIFY TRIGGERS

Some children show their distress by being aggressive toward themselves, other children, adults, and objects. If you notice this happening, try to understand what might have triggered the behavior. Ask what happened just before their outburst. Anger is a secondary emotion that can quickly follow on the heels of fear, sadness, feeling out of control, or being misunderstood. Help them identify their primary emotion, which may be easier for them to talk about and manage. You could say, "Sometimes when people throw things or hurt people, it's because they are hurting inside. I wonder what your throwing/hitting hand would say if it could speak and tell us what it's thinking and feeling?"

Before disciplining a child for being out of control, stop and consider any distress that might be fueling their misbehavior. Gently say something like, “Tommy, I know you don’t usually behave like this, and I’m wondering if something is bothering you or making you feel funny inside. Would you like to have a cuddle and we can talk about it together?”

#### **SPREAD CALM**

Stay calm. The calmer you are, the easier it is to help your child calm down and feel safe. If you become angry or shout, they are likely to become more distressed, which will make it even harder for them to manage their behavior. Or they may lie to you or hide their behavior because they feel afraid.

Reassure them of your love, acceptance, and care before you try to correct them. Wait until an aggressive child has calmed down before touching them. Find other ways to connect. Gently say, “It sounds like you are really frustrated/upset/annoyed/hurt. I want you to know that I care about what you are feeling, and I’m going to stay with you until you feel better.” Wait for them to calm down before trying to have a rational conversation about their behavior.

Help them to find a positive outlet for their energy—a safe place to burn off steam, an engaging hobby, a calming activity, a fun distraction, a kind thing to do for someone else, or a gratitude activity. If they have hurt another child, help them do something to repair the relationship. If they have made a mess, help them clean it up.

#### **WATCH FOR SIGNS**

Look out for the quieter children, too. It’s easier to miss changes in the behavior of children who are introverts, who are naturally less active, or who stay alone in their rooms.

Emotional distress is the most common cause of abdominal pain in children. So respond to tummy aches with loving care and attention, and always ask if anything is bothering them.

Some anxious and distressed children will act younger than their age, such as sucking their thumb, bed-wetting, or wanting a parent to feed them. This is often a response to feeling sad, insecure, or frightened and in need of reassurance and protection. They might unconsciously regress to an age when they received more comfort and support. Avoid shaming them for their behavior and making them feel worse. Listen to them and be compassionate, comforting, and reassuring.

#### **MAKE A COMFORT MENU**

When children feel sad or depressed, they might cry more than usual, refuse to do simple tasks, be less energetic, or become aggressive. They may have lost someone or something important to them. Take lots of time to listen to their sad stories and reassure them with your hugs and comfort. Ask how you can help them feel better.

Make a “comfort menu” together, listing things that help them feel better when they’re sad inside. Always include talking to you and having a big hug so they don’t have to feel sad alone. Encourage them to make a gratitude journal where they write or draw the things that they are thankful for each day. Being kind to others can also help them to feel happier. Sometimes when people are sad, something very simple becomes an almost impossible task. So if they are struggling to do something, gently come alongside and support them.

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## Is Everything OK?

### CREATE ROUTINES

Establish simple everyday routines, with enough space for some flexibility. Slow down the pace of activity in the home, and be intentional about creating a warm, safe, and happy place for children to be. Set up a chill-out area or even just a basket or box of quieting activities—bubbles, calming storybooks, cuddly toys, etc. Read stories from the library about children managing their feelings in different ways. Go outside for refreshing walks in nature whenever you can. Plan family worship and prayer times around calm and reassuring themes of God's love, forgiveness, and protective care.

If you're all working and studying from home or life is particularly stressful, create some fun ways to release the tension. Invite everyone to stop what they're doing once an hour and connect in a fun and creative way. Try calling out an alphabet of gratitude together or try a physical challenge such as patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time. Play a quick group game. Sing a favorite action song together. Run around the house and find some things that are each color of the rainbow. Throw a soft ball to each other as you tell something that makes you feel happy.



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### CHECK IN

Daily emotional check-ins can help you notice when a child is distressed. This can also help them find the language and opportunity to talk to you about their struggles. Check in by asking them about the happiest moment, saddest moment, most difficult/challenging moment, and most surprising moment of their day. Always take time to listen to their concerns, remembering that they may not always be able to express their thoughts and feelings clearly. Normalize their worries and experiences, when appropriate, because everyone is feeling a little topsy-turvy at the moment. Support them as they explore activities that might be helpful for them.

### LOOK FOR MORE

Whenever you look at a child's behavior, you are just seeing the tip of the iceberg. If they are happy, there is a whole load of happy beneath the surface, and if they are behaving in unexpected, aggressive, and distressing ways, there is probably a whole lot of sadness, fear, frustration, and worry inside them that needs to be soothed and untangled.

All children will feel sad, afraid, anxious, frustrated, or angry, and it's quite normal for them to express their feelings through their behavior, especially if they are experiencing a complex feeling that they can't name or describe.

Notice when troubling behaviors become a regular pattern. Think about what was happening in their life when the behavior began, because that might help you understand their underlying emotions and distress. When do these behaviors happen, and how often? Are certain events more likely to trigger the behavior?

Talk to your family doctor about your concerns, and try to get help for the child as soon as possible so their distress can be relieved. Wherever possible, choose a therapy in which children are seen together with their parents and caregivers so that you can understand what is bothering your child and support them better.

Visit [www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk) for clear and simple advice to help your child through all kinds of troubling behaviors, as well as ideas and activities that can help them to flourish. 

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# TIPS TO ~~SURVIVE~~ THRIVE



## RAISING PKS

SURELY WE ALL KNOW what a PK is—a preacher’s kid. Raising PKs is similar to raising any other kid, and they should not be made to feel that they are “different” from others! They need to abide by the principles of integrity that every other child should follow. So what can we do to help them? *Communication* is one of the most important tools.

**Talk to them.** Keep communication open. Help them understand that they can trust you. Talk to them when they are very young—they love to talk when they’re little! They will be more likely to continue communicating if they are in the habit of communicating with you all along.

**Listen to them.** Many children (especially in their teens) say, “My parents don’t listen to me—they just preach at me.” When they share something they want to do that you think is a “wild” idea, it is tempting to immediately blurt out some words of wisdom, but don’t—just *listen*. Let them *talk about it* while you *listen*, occasionally nodding your head or making a comment, showing that you hear them. Try to not show anger or impatience. Later on in the day (or even the next day—*choose the right time!*) say, “You know, I was thinking about our conversation earlier today (yesterday). Have you thought of how it might work out if you did \_\_\_\_\_?” Then gently make a few suggestions, thus leading your child to think it through again, making wiser decisions.

**Pray for them.** There is one thing I wish I had done more of when our children were young: I wish I had prayed more for them. Spend time praying for your children—in your quiet times with the Lord, at the kitchen sink, in the car, or wherever (Deuteronomy 6:7). The only thing that lies within our ability is to cooperate with God—He is the One who has the power to influence them. And always keep in mind Galatians 6:9: “Do not let yourselves get tired of doing good. If we do not give up, we will get what is coming to us at the right time” (NLV). J

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



*They should not  
be made to feel  
that they are  
“different.”*



# You Are **NOT** Alone

HERE ARE FIVE IMPORTANT LESSONS I'VE  
LEARNED AS A PASTOR'S SPOUSE.

MY JOURNEY AS A PASTOR'S SPOUSE began over 20 years ago. I was young, naïve, and a bit of a dreamer. I thought the possibilities of serving God alongside my husband were endless. As they say, the sky was the limit.

As I look back on those first years, I can see now how God worked in miraculous ways to grow my faith in Him. Some of my most trying moments, as well as the most joyous, have been in the role of pastor's spouse.

Reviewing my journey, I see that God has been teaching me along the way many principles of His kingdom. He has also constantly been drawing me closer to Himself. My hope is that this reflection on some key areas of growth that I have experienced can serve as encouragement for other ministry spouses.

## **1. God designed us to be unique for Him.**

Expectations can be placed on a spouse that are just not realistic or even reasonable. God did not create you or me out of a cookie-cutter mold. We are all different from one another. There were times when church members expected me to serve in certain church ministries or to fit a mold of their view of a pastor's spouse. I did not sing. I did not play the piano. And I was not good at coordinating a potluck dinner.

My first Sabbath as a pastor's spouse found me sitting in a pew waiting for the service to begin. All of a sudden, I felt a tug on my shoe. Startled, I looked down to see the bright eyes of a small child looking up at me from the floor. In a quiet voice, she sweetly asked, "Are you a vegetarian?" My induction process had begun. She had been prompted by someone in the congregation to approach me with that question to see if I fit their perception of following the health message.

It took me many years to realize it was acceptable to not meet other people's expectations. There is only one expectation that matters—God's. His voice alone is the one that should direct my thoughts and actions. He is the one who has gifted me with talents to be used the way He knows is best. More quality time with Him has given me wisdom. Yes, there are times He will speak through other people. And when others are led by Him, it will be evident in their approach.

The best counsel I can give to help another spouse who is struggling with finding her "space" is to simply spend time with God every single day. There is no substitute for taking quality special time to listen for His voice. His Holy Spirit has a unique way of speaking to each of our hearts in a personal way. He knows how to settle in our minds what the right path is for us. He knows how to impart wisdom for the boundaries we need in order to balance all the areas of life.

Some of my gifts are active listening, encouragement, and being a prayer partner. I love to sit down with a person and give her time to talk about what is on her heart. As God leads, I share promises with her from His Word and pray with her about her concerns. I am very comfortable sharing tidbits of my own testimony that might be encouraging to someone in their spiritual journey with God.

## **2. People often react from a place of hurt in their own lives.**

Ministry has afforded me the opportunity to shed many tears—tears over hateful words, mean emails, and snide remarks that tend to leave a deep scar on the heart. Truthfully, 20 years ago I did not know that church members, people of God, could be so cruel. And when things were said and done, I took it to heart and nursed those hurts for a long time.

Then the Holy Spirit began to work on me and help me realize a key truth that started to set me free from the pain of past wrongs: *hurt people hurt people*. And churches are full of hurting people. When we do not know how to properly process pain, we take it out on others. Christ's words on the cross took on a whole new meaning for me: "Father, forgive them; *for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34, KJV, emphasis supplied). I began to realize that, while I am not perfect by any means, the majority of emotional projectiles hurled my way had little, if anything, to do with me personally. I was simply an easy target.

There were also many instances when I witnessed my husband being the object of others' pain. It's one thing when it happens to you, but when your spouse or children are suffering, it goes to a deeper level of discouragement. There were times the barbs would come at him right before he would go up to preach. It would happen in the back room, the place where prayer and support are offered just before the service begins. And right before he would leave the room, someone might offer a comment that would deflate his confidence before stepping up to the podium.

However, God has worked through all the valleys of pain to help me understand His own character more deeply. No one has been treated more cruelly than Jesus Himself. His life here on earth was filled with more sorrow than joy; hence, He was called the Man of Sorrows. And yet, He was always loving, merciful, and patient. No matter the insults, He clung to His relationship with the Father to sustain Him through all circumstances. He chose to remember His calling as the Savior of the world. He offers the same strength to each one of us. He has equipped us to walk down any path He has set before us.



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*Part of seeing the big picture is realizing we have been called to a work that has everlasting results.*

### **3. Keep focused on the big picture of life and ministry.**

In the midst of trouble, it can be very difficult to see anything good. More often than not, the darkness of pain and suffering drowns out any glimpse of light and hope. Faith tends to give way to feelings of despair and discouragement. Have you been there? Maybe you are experiencing that dark place right now.

Remember Joseph in the Bible? He was the one with a coat of many colors, a mind full of dreams, and older brothers who intensely hated him. The ones he should have been able to trust for protection instead plotted to kill him. Joseph was stripped, beaten, sold into slavery, and sent to a foreign land. He had many years to reflect on what happened to him. I've often thought about his attitude toward his brothers and God during those years in Egypt.

After 20 years, Joseph was reunited with his brothers. The Bible gives a glimpse into his heart as he interacted with them. After his father died, the brothers were still afraid Joseph might seek retaliation for their prior wrongs. Yet we see what I call the "original" Romans 8:28 found in Genesis 50:20: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."

Through the years, I have learned to take hold of the same faith that Joseph had in the God of heaven. He chose to see his experiences through the lens of faith. His perspective was widened to see a plan bigger and more far-reaching than his own life. This is why I believe Romans 8:28. When we believe, God can take any circumstance and truly bring something out of it for our good and His glory.

Part of seeing the big picture is realizing we have been called to a work that has everlasting results. Some of my most joyous moments have been studying the Bible with friends who then made the choice to follow Jesus and be baptized. Helping them become disciples of Christ and discover their gifts to continue that ripple effect of expanding God's kingdom is priceless indeed.

### **4. Your role in ministry will fluctuate with the seasons of life.**

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us there is a season for everything. Life is not static, and neither is ministry life. In our first years of ministry, I had more time to dedicate to church functions and evangelistic campaigns. Then children came. And aging parents. Priorities do shift a bit with the changes of life.

With this thought comes the necessity of understanding healthy boundaries. If you have ever flown on a plane, you are familiar with the safety instructions that are reviewed by the flight attendants prior to takeoff. One of those instructions involves the oxygen mask. If there is a change in air pressure, oxygen masks will detach from above your seat. It is necessary for you to put on your own mask before assisting someone else. Why? If you become depleted of oxygen and cannot breathe, you are not going to be of benefit to anyone else.

The same is true in ministry life. It is easy to get so caught up in all the things that need to be done that we lose sight of true priorities. I have listened to many stories through the years of other pastors' spouses who lament the choices that were made at the sacrifice of their own spiritual health and families.

Every day we must apply the oxygen mask of spending time with God for ourselves. There is no substitute. Doing ministry work for Him is not the same as sitting at the table and taking nourishment for our own growth. Our marriages and families need to be strong and healthy. This requires

setting aside quality time with our spouse and children to foster those relationships.

Throughout our years in ministry, my husband and I have made it a priority to spend at least one evening a week together as our “date” night. It is special time dedicated to focusing on each other to keep the marriage relationship strong and thriving. For our family life, we set aside time every week to do something our daughters like to do, whether it’s hiking, playing miniature golf, or playing a game of tennis. And when our girls were younger, my husband and I would take turns spending weekly time with each daughter one-on-one to facilitate that individual time to communicate how special they are to us. Time is one of the greatest gifts we can share with our family.

### **5. Be willing to listen to others who have walked the path ahead of you.**

I have been blessed to have several mentors through the years. Listening to their experiences has given me much hope. I have learned to trust God more deeply. There are many unknowns in ministry and seasons of potential loneliness and isolation. Pastoral spouses tend to have very few, if any, people they can truly confide in for personal thoughts and situations. It becomes very easy to believe you are the only one who has ever faced a particular hardship.

This can lead to burnout, depression, and an overall sense of complete despondency. We went through all of these at various phases in our ministry. These factors can put a tremendous strain on marriages and family life. I thank God that during some of our lowest points, He always provided a ray of hopeful encouragement. And He would do it through other people—people who had walked the path before us and come out on the other side.

One such time was when we went to a prayer conference in Modesto, California. We went there completely drained spiritually and on the verge of quitting ministry altogether. But God put us with a prayer group that became the saving grace of our lives at that time. Others who had suffered pain and heartache became keenly aware of our situation and became the support we needed for that very time in our lives.

### **CONCLUSION**

As a pastor’s spouse I know God has placed a specific calling on my life. He has blessed and equipped me to be His servant in just the way He has designed me. And the same is true for you. We may not sing. We may not play the piano. We may not even organize functions very well.

But we can love. We can support and encourage. We can believe and pray for God’s Spirit to fill us with His power to do His work. He has called us to the greatest ministry of all—to proclaim the everlasting gospel to a world that desperately needs hope and peace. He has called us to touch others for His salvation through the unique ways He has gifted us. My fellow pastor’s spouse, you are not alone. Be strong and courageous in the Lord. He is always with us. 7

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*Marquita Klinedinst is a woman who loves God and desires to share His goodness with others. She has been married to Pastor David Klinedinst for 25 years. They have been blessed with two beautiful daughters, Melaney and Emiley. Marquita has spoken in venues ranging from small groups to women’s convocations and prayer conferences, as well as preached evangelistic series. She has enjoyed traveling to several countries to share the love and hope of Jesus. If she were to describe the underlying theme of all her messages, it would be: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).*

## MARRIED TO A PASTOR?

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



Official groups for Ministry Spouses online:

 [ministerialspouses](#)  [@ministryspouses](#)  [@gc\\_ministerial\\_spouses](#)





# GOD'S HEALTH RETREAT

IT'S CLOSER THAN YOU THINK AND AVAILABLE TO ALL OF US.

*"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order."—John Burroughs*

## FINDING PERSPECTIVE

When Linda\* graduated, she felt ready to take on the world. Eagerly she sent out her résumé and applied for work at various business locations. But the days, weeks, and months passed without a glimmer of a job possibility. She lost confidence in herself. This was not how she envisioned her life and her career. She began to show signs of depression, demonstrated by frequent bouts of sadness, loss of interest in spending time with family and friends, and isolating herself more and more.

Out of deep concern, Linda's parents gifted her with two weeks of wilderness training. She returned a changed person. While being totally immersed in nature for that short time, she found herself able to think more clearly about her priorities and goals in life. She now demonstrated a positive, cheerful attitude regarding her strengths and abilities.

## GETTING BACK ON TRACK

At 50 years of age, Jim\* was beginning to feel the effects of his lifestyle. Working 60 hours a week, often with no time for breaks or exercise, and usually grabbing a bite of lunch at his desk took a toll on his physical and mental health. He had been putting on weight. He felt chronically tired, and his blood pressure was creeping upward.

Acting on a suggestion from his doctor, Jim organized an exercise program with a group of friends in his community. The goal was to walk through areas of the countryside together on weekends. Experiencing the trails with scenic views of trees and flowers while basking in sunshine and fresh air made a difference. Under the expanse of clouds and blue skies, surrounded by the quiet hum of wildlife, Jim began to feel the stress-reducing and awe-inspiring effects of nature. His group also started jogging and rock climbing.



*“The pure air, the glad sunshine, the flowers and trees, the orchards and vineyards, and outdoor exercise amid these surroundings, are health-giving, life-giving.” —The Ministry of Healing, p. 264*

It didn't take long for Jim to notice with amazement how energized he felt. Over time he lost weight, and his blood pressure stabilized. He found himself relaxed and rejuvenated upon returning to work each Monday.

#### WHY NATURE?

The very beginning of humankind takes place in a garden. The Creator chose and formed for our first parents the best environment for health and happiness. Their home was not decorated with the variety of things we think necessary for comfort and beauty. Rather, lovely flowers, decorative shrubbery, and majestic trees surrounded them. The sweet songs of birds, the pure air, and the invigorating sunshine all fed the senses with life-giving inspiration to body, mind, and soul.

Adam and Eve were given the pleasant task of caring for this amazing garden. In the evening they had time and opportunity for joyful visits with the Creator Himself.

This first couple did not need to rush to work every day, battling heavy traffic, punching a time clock, and sitting at a desk hour after hour. Nor did they have the stress of deadlines, the pressure of meeting home and family financial needs, restless sleep, anxious thoughts, health concerns, and burnout.

#### GOD'S TREATMENT PLAN

As demonstrated in the stories of Linda and Jim, it appears that the more we engage with nature, the better off we are. In spite of the effects of sin upon our environment, it's pretty amazing—and certainly a tribute to our Creator God—that nature, as flawed as it has become, still has health-giving, vitality-restoring effects on humanity. Although it is not possible to talk face-to-face with God as did our first parents, our heavenly Father still communicates with His children and ministers to the physical, mental, and emotional needs of humanity through the wonders of nature. Indeed, “Nature is God's physician.”<sup>†</sup>

1. **Nature is healing.** Being in nature, or to a lesser degree just looking at pictures of nature scenes, has a healing, uplifting, and calming effect. Research has shown that postoperative patients did better with pain management and healing if they had “green” views—that is, views of trees, gardens, and sky rather than a cement wall outside the window. Even a bouquet of colorful flowers in the room can brighten the mood and speak hope and cheer.
2. **Nature is soothing.** Emotional or physical pain often can be softened and soothed by being outdoors relaxing in the sunshine and fresh air.
3. **Nature is restoring.** Exposure to nature provides us with the “sunshine vitamin,” vitamin D, which supports the immune system and protects against disease. Time spent outdoors, surrounded by pleasant fragrances and the beauty of flowers, trees, and majestic mountains, is also associated with aiding in recovery from depression and cognitive disorders. There is an increased sense of well-being, meaningfulness, and vitality. The more time spent in nature, the more we will be able to focus and think more clearly, solve problems more effectively, find optimism and renewed enthusiasm for life's demands, and be reminded of our strengths and blessings.



## CAN'T GET THERE?

COVID-19 has put a damper on family outings to parks and retreats. Add to that our busy schedules, which often afford no spare time for trips to scenic locations. However, there are some ways we can incorporate more exposure to nature right where we are.

1. **Take frequent walks.** Besides being good for the heart, muscles, and metabolism rate, just getting outdoors and taking walks in the fresh air and sunshine helps activate those feel-good endorphins.
2. **Start nature journaling.** For added interest and fun, keep a record of what you have seen and heard in the world of nature. Add pictures, sketches, and mementos of leaves, flowers, feathers, stones, etc.
3. **Have a home garden.** Plants in the home contribute to purifying the air we breathe while adding color and ambiance. Many find enjoyment in designing and creating their own outdoor garden oasis. Beautiful shrubs and flowers carefully placed make any area inviting, refreshing, and cheering.
4. **Work outside.** Many business professionals these days work from home. When opportunity, climate, and location are suitable, spend some of those hours working out in the fresh air to inspire the senses and reduce tension.

5. **Eat fresh.** Eating plant-based foods provided by a wise and caring Creator is one more way to benefit health-wise from our connection with nature. Consuming the rich provisions of proteins, vitamins, and minerals found in fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts aids our bodies in maintaining an optimal state of functionality while promoting good health and longevity.



## OUR MODEL

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, found restoration and healing by frequently retiring to the mountains and hillsides with His burdens and exhaustion. There He would commune with the heavenly Father while in nature's soothing and healing surroundings. How much more do we, weak and sinful mortals, need such healing and renewal. Jesus would return from these hours of prayer and respite with an aura of peace and renewed freshness of life and power. We too can be healed and strengthened from time spent in God's presence at His "health retreat" — nature. J

*"For the beauty of the earth,  
For the glory of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies,  
Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
This our grateful song of praise."  
—Folliott S. Pierpoint*

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\* Names changed.

† Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 263

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*Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years. She enjoys music, creative arts, cooking, and reading.*



— DEAR DEBORAH

## Dear Deborah,

*Over the past year, the stay-at-home orders and social distancing have wrought so many changes—some good, others not so great. A huge area of concern is my lack of motivation. I'm usually a self-starter and go-getter, but now I'm struggling to do even the simplest task. The "new normal" feels miserable, and I desperately need things to change.*

*Sincerely,  
Normally Not This Way*

## Dear Normally Not This Way,

These unprecedented times have taken a toll on many lives and changed life as we once knew it. Be assured that you are not alone in your concerns. Moving forward feels fearful and uncertain for some, but we can find peace in the promise from Isaiah 41:10: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Implementing daily Scripture readings, accompanied with prayer, will lift your heart and revive your soul. This will provide an avenue for a motivational makeover! In addition, ask God to impress your heart with someone who needs a special blessing. Once He reveals a name, buy or make a card with handwritten words of encouragement, lift up a prayer for them, and drop the card in the mail. This simple act can be a game changer for you and the recipient. Not only is it a tremendous stress reducer, but the blessings you both receive can ignite and engage you for a greater purpose.

Continue to rest in God's precious promises, which continually remind us that He can heal and restore us for His glory! "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

God is fighting our battles for us, and we can trust Him to restore and equip us in preparation for His soon return!

Prayerfully,  
Deborah





# THE VIRTUE OF *Gratitude*

PRACTICING THIS SIMPLE HABIT WILL  
TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE.

AFTER MY WIFE DIED, I kind of stopped noticing colors for some time. We had always enjoyed the fall colors together. Autumn was her favorite season of the year, but without her by my side, the leaves just didn't seem colorful anymore. Instead, everything looked gray and bland. The places we had once enjoyed together seemed unattractive without her. The songs I had once sung sounded meaningless. The future I had once envisioned seemed empty. Like many people grieving the death of a loved one, I was so focused on what I had lost that it was difficult for me to notice or appreciate the blessings I still had. To be completely honest, the last thing I wanted to practice was gratitude.

King Solomon wrote, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: . . . A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4).

God understands that we cycle through different emotions. We can come to Him in sorrow, joy, anger, or fear—and be completely honest with Him about how we are feeling. He will respond with compassion and kindness. But regardless of the circumstances and conflicting emotions of our lives, God still wants us to practice gratitude. He knows that gratitude will remind us of His love and power and will enhance the quality of our lives.

My aunt Hilde modeled gratitude to me in a beautiful way. She could relate to my pain because her husband had died in a tragic car accident a couple of years earlier. But she chose to remain grateful and challenged me to do the same. She encouraged me to do a simple gratitude exercise that I found to be very helpful. Each day for a week, I was to write down 10 words of things I was grateful for as well as 10 sentences explaining why I was grateful for each thing. The sentences could even be turned into prayers. For example:

*Eyes.* Thank You, Lord, for my eyes, because they allow me to see color and to see the faces of people I love.

*Hands.* Thank You, God, for my hands, which allow me to write, to do good, and to touch other people.

*Toothbrush.* Thank You, Lord, for my toothbrush, because it helps my mouth to feel fresh and clean, which also helps give me confidence.

When I first started the practice, it was challenging to know what to write. But gratitude is like a muscle; the more you exercise it, the stronger it grows. At the end of the week, I had 70 things to be grateful for, but I also had a new perspective. Instead of focusing on what I didn't have, I had increased my capacity to enjoy the "hidden" blessings that had been there all along.

#### **HIDDEN BLESSINGS**

Do you have any "hidden blessings" that you could enjoy more? Do you feel burdened and frustrated with the negative or unfair aspects of life? If so, perhaps gratitude can bless you like it has blessed me.

God has invited and called His children to be people who exercise gratitude. "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," the apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Giving thanks means remembering that someone has done something good for us and expressing that goodness in words. God wants us to express our gratitude for the life He has given us and the many beautiful things He has created for us to enjoy.

On this side of eternity, life will never run smoothly or perfectly. But it doesn't have to be perfect to be beautiful! Beauty meets and greets us unlike anything else in the world. It startles us in breathtaking ways, moving our minds and hearts to consider its Source. The fragrant smell of a rose, the majestic waves crashing on the shore, the affectionate twinkle in a friend's eyes—each experience of beauty echoes God's love and reminds us of the beautiful things He has prepared for those who love Him.

Like goodness, beauty is part of God's created reality. Although it surrounds us, it's something we often miss. Developing an attitude of gratitude will open our eyes to the beautiful things in nature, the beautiful people, and the beautiful experiences in life that we often overlook. Gratitude allows us to be thankful for the simple blessings and valuable people around us, without demanding perfection or satisfaction all the time. Interestingly, the word "gratitude" is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness.

By practicing gratitude, virtuous people shift their attention from the imaginary things they don't have to the reality of the blessings they do (still) have. Gratitude grows out of an awareness of God's generosity and a curiosity to explore the specific ways He has shown His love to us. Such gratitude widens the horizon of life and increases our capacity to experience pleasure.

Instead of focusing on the things we lack or the things we are unable to do, we can deliberately reflect on the many things we *do have* and *are able* to do. Gratitude fosters a mindset that brings satisfaction in its wake. It also raises our awareness of the many opportunities and possibilities we have to share God's blessings with others. This can be as simple as sharing a smile, expressing appreciation, or doing a random act of kindness.

A Harvard Health article entitled "In Praise of Gratitude" states: "In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships."<sup>1</sup>

*"Gratitude turns what we have into enough."*

*—Melody Beattie*

*Life  
doesn't  
have to  
be perfect  
to be  
beautiful!*



Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, a leading researcher and psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, scientifically tested the impact of various gratitude exercises on over 400 people. While gratitude journaling proved to be beneficial, another practice was even more powerful. Participants received an assignment to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to a person who had contributed to their lives but had never been properly thanked for his or her kindness. After delivering their letters, participants immediately exhibited a huge increase in happiness scores. The study showed that the impact was greater than that of any other gratitude intervention. These positive effects lasted for a month.<sup>2</sup> No wonder God calls us to express our thankfulness—He knows it will bring us joy and will be a blessing to those around us.

### YOUR TURN

Imagine the tremendous benefit you can receive as you cultivate an attitude of gratitude: positive emotions, memories of good experiences, increased physical and mental health, stronger relationships, and increased resilience to cope with adverse situations. These benefits are well worth the minimal effort required to practice gratitude.

Giving thanks indeed changes life for the better. I can personally testify to this. Learning to be thankful and to express gratitude following the death of my wife, Ulrike, was probably one of the most difficult things I have ever learned, but it opened up a perspective that has transformed my life for the better. Those who give thanks live not only more

gratefully, but also more contentedly and healthfully. Gratitude leads to peace and contentment. According to a wise Amish proverb, “Contentment is not getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.”<sup>3</sup>

My aunt challenged me to practice gratitude, and I want to challenge you. Every day for the next week, write down 10 things for which you are grateful. After you have written down 10 words (e.g., eyes, bed, friend, etc.), think for a moment about what these things actually mean to you (e.g., What do my eyes mean for me? What do they enable me to do that I wouldn’t be able to do if I were blind? What does my bed mean to me? How would life change if I always had to sleep on a hard, cold floor? What does my friend mean to me? How would life be different if I didn’t have this friend in my life?).

Then take each word and write a short sentence expressing your gratitude to God, the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift” (James 1:17). You can say: “Lord Jesus, thank You for my eyes with which I can see colors and read books. Thank You for my bed that keeps me comfortable and warm. Thank You for my supportive friend who makes life so much more enjoyable. Thank You for . . .”

Next, speak each of these sentences out loud so that you can hear your own voice. The more you engage your senses (seeing, touching, speaking, hearing) in expressing thankfulness, the more firmly the grateful thoughts will be fixed in your mind.

The next day, repeat the process with 10 new things. If you want to intensify this exercise, repeat the items from the previous day (or days). At the end of just one week, you will already have 70 reasons to be grateful! If you keep building the habit, gratitude will change your life—guaranteed! J

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<sup>1</sup> [www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/in-praise-of-gratitude](http://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/in-praise-of-gratitude).

<sup>2</sup> M. E. P. Seligman et al., “Empirical Validation of Interventions,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 1 (July–August 2005): pp. 410–421, as quoted in Fisher, *The Heart of the Amish*, pp. 163, 176.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher, *The Heart of the Amish*, p. 160.

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**Frank M. Hasel, Ph.D.**, is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A native of Germany, Frank served as a pastor, professor, and dean of theology before moving to the United States. He believes that the teachings of the Bible promote human flourishing and enhance every aspect of life. This article is excerpted from his recent book *Living for God: Reclaiming the Joy of Christian Virtue*.



# LIVING FOR GOD

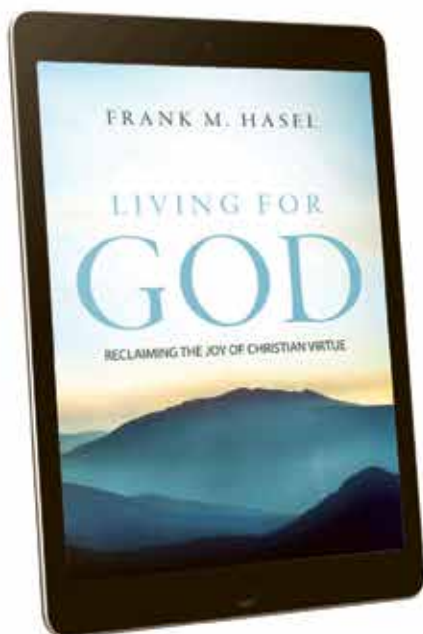
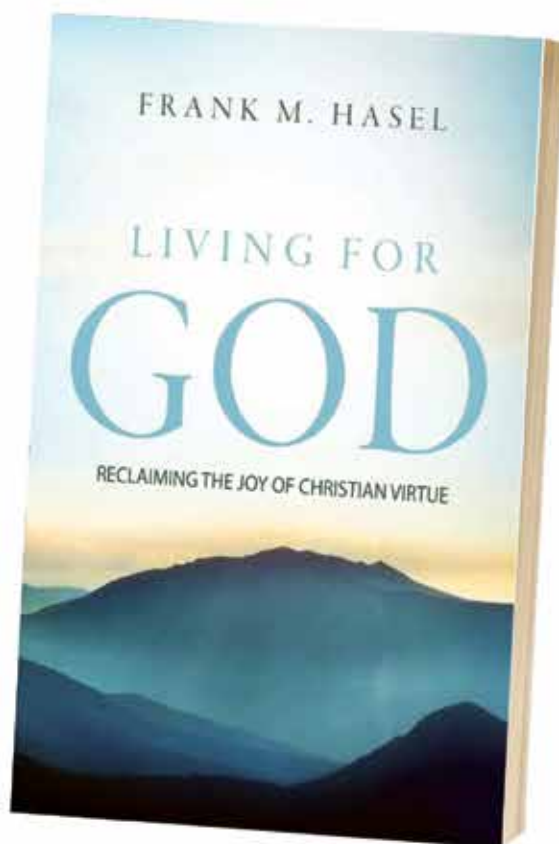


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# Don't Be Afraid!

Have you ever felt scared? Most people feel afraid at some time. Fear can be a good thing because it can keep us safe from doing something dangerous and hurting ourselves.

Always remember that God cares for us and is with us to help us when we feel afraid. Here are some worship activities for you and your family to help you think about what makes you feel afraid and how you can help each other feel safe.



Around the time Jesus was born, lots of angels came to visit earth. They must have been quite dazzling and beautiful. But even though they were kind and had good news to share, they often surprised people and made them jump! Read these verses to see what the angels said to help people not be scared of them.

**Luke 1:11-13**

**Luke 1:26-30**

**Luke 2:8-12**

## ANGEL PICTURE

Take a piece of white typing paper and turn it so that the short side of the paper is at the bottom. In the lower half of the page draw a picture of a time when you felt afraid. Then turn the sheet over and hold the picture up to the window so the blank side of the paper is facing you. You should be able to see your first picture through the paper. Draw a very faint line along the top edge of the picture you have drawn. Now draw an angel on the back of your picture and above the line you have drawn. When you have finished, turn the page over to show your original picture. Pick up the picture and hold it up to the light to see the angel taking care of you in your scary moment.

## WHO WAS AFRAID?

In your family, take turns choosing one of these Bible characters. Look in your Bible to find a story about a time when they might have been afraid. How would you have felt if you were in their situation? How did God help them when they were afraid? Which of the stories do you like the best? Which person's story helps you when you are afraid? How do these stories help you to understand more about God's love and care for you?

- Esther
- Daniel
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
- Noah
- Moses
- Jacob
- Joseph (Jacob's son)
- Elijah
- Naomi
- Jonah
- David
- Simon Peter

# FAMILY TALK

As a family, use this sentence to tell others what makes you feel afraid and what helps you to calm down. Don't forget that adults can sometimes be scared too! "I can feel afraid when \_\_\_\_\_, and what helps me to calm down is \_\_\_\_\_." Here are some ideas to choose from for calming down:

- Praying
- Remembering God is with me
- Asking someone to help me feel safe
- Repeating a Bible verse
- Breathing deeply and slowly
- Remembering a time when I managed my fear well
- Making a list of 10 things I am thankful for
- Other (What else would you and your family add to the list?)

Write out your list of helpful things to do when you are afraid so that you can look at it whenever you need to. Remember that when a person makes you feel afraid, you must always tell someone who cares for you so that they can help you be safe.

# BUBBLE BREATHING



Whenever you feel afraid or worried, try this safe way of breathing that naturally helps you calm down. If you have ever blown bubbles, imagine you are blowing bubbles now. Take a deep breath in through your nose, as deep as you can. Hold it for 3-4 seconds, then blow your breath out as s-l-o-w-l-y as possible, or as if you are trying to blow a big bubble without popping it! Do this 3 or 4 times, and you will soon feel more relaxed and calm. Practice with your whole family! Why not blow bubbles if you have them? Imagine that all the bubbles blowing away are like giving all your fears and worries to God and watching them slowly disappear.

# BIBLE PROMISES ABOUT FEAR

God knows that our world can be a very scary place at times. He has given us lots of promises that He will be with us and that we don't need to worry about the most important things. He loves us very much, and He promises to come and take us back to heaven one day. Here are some lovely Bible verses to help us with our fears. Choose the one you like best, write it out, and decorate it with your favorite colors. Ask an adult to help you look for other Bible verses that can help when you feel afraid.

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Psalm 23:4
- Psalm 46:10
- Isaiah 41:10
- John 14:27
- Philippians 4:6, 7

# STORY TIME

Ask some of the adults in your family to tell you the story of a time when they were afraid and God helped them. Perhaps you could record or video them telling their stories. What can you learn from their stories that will help you with your own fears?







## PEACE, BE STILL!



With your family, act out the story of Jesus in the storm in Mark 4:35-41. Find a large piece of blue or white fabric, like an old tablecloth, to use as the lake. Then find something small, light, and unbreakable to be the boat. You could cut a boat shape from a cardboard box, use a small dishwashing sponge, or even use a sock! Ask each person in the family or group to hold onto the corner or edge of the fabric and place the “boat” in the center of the cloth. Start by rippling the fabric “lake” together by gently shaking the edges that you are holding.

Talk about how tired Jesus is after a long day of teaching and helping people. He is so tired that He finds a snug place in the boat and falls asleep. Rock the boat gently so that Jesus will fall asleep. But soon a storm comes. Now ripple the lake so that the waves get slowly bigger and bigger and the boat is tossed about.

Think about how it feels for the disciples in the little boat in a big storm! Tell each other how you would feel if you thought your boat would turn over or sink. Then have one of the grownups call out “Peace, be still!” As quickly as possible, hold the blue fabric tight and still to make the lake calm down. Pray together, thanking God that He has the power to make all our storms disappear. Also thank Him for being with us, like Jesus, in the storms that come.



## PAUL'S SECRET FOR SCARY PLACES

Paul was in some very scary places. Read about some of them in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Which one of these would you find the scariest? But Paul learned some good ways to help himself when he was in a scary place. When he was in prison and close to death, he wrote an amazingly happy letter to his friends in Philippi. In Philippians 4 he wrote a list of things that can also help us feel less afraid, like being thankful, feeling content, finding joy in God, and thinking about lovely things instead of scary things. Read Philippians 4 with your family and find some of Paul's secrets. Choose one of them to try with your family.



## MAKE A REMINDER

Use your best craft materials, or whatever safe things you can find in nature. Make something to remind you that God is always close to you when you feel afraid. Perhaps you could write a Bible verse on a piece of fabric that you can keep in your pocket. Create a picture for your home or gather some objects that remind you of God's care and protection, like a heart, candle, or key, and place them in a bowl. Tell your family about what you made or why you chose what you gathered.

**Karen Holford** is married to Pastor Bernie Holford, and they live near London, England. She is sometimes afraid when she looks down from high places. When she prays, God helps her to feel calm and safe again.

### *East-Central Africa Division*

The East-Central Africa Division held Zoom meetings with ministerial spouses to pray, share the Word of God, and encourage one another.



*Ministerial spouse leaders from unions in East-Central Africa Division met together on Zoom.*

In North East Congo Union Mission, Shepherdesses sang during an ordination service in early December. During this event, 10 pastors were ordained. The ministerial teams praise God that the work is going on despite the challenges.



*Shepherdesses sang at the ordination service in North East Congo.*

Highlights of the weekend included the sharing of heartwarming notes of gratitude and affirmation for each of the spouses, written by their church members; enjoying the Sanyu Health Center's spa facilities; learning from Ms. Haoyin Zheng how to make products using essential oils; and a field trip to the Xiangshan Visitor Center at Sun Moon Lake.

The group of spouses really appreciated the retreat, and many expressed their gratitude in thank-you notes of reflection to the MSA team. One of them included the hope that is found for all of us in Philippians 1:6 (KJV): "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

*by Kathy Lin and Lisa Clouzet, TWC and NSD MSA coordinators*



*Discussion groups met during the retreat in Taiwan.*

### *Northern Asia-Pacific Division*

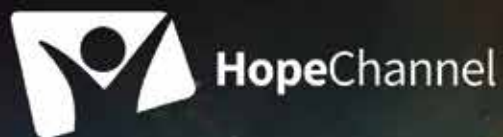
With COVID-19 precautions in mind, 27 ministerial spouses gathered September 13-15, 2020, for the Ministerial Spouses Association (MSA) retreat of the Taiwan Conference (TWC). The retreat was organized and led by Mrs. Kathy (Hui-Chun) Lin, TWC's MSA coordinator, and her team. The retreat provided opportunities to listen to inspirational speakers, visit with and encourage one another, share meals together, and recharge at the beautiful location of Sanyu Health Center.

Ms. Huangshumei Ke was the keynote speaker for morning and evening worships. She focused on inspiring topics found in the book of Daniel. Pastor James Wu, TWC ministerial association secretary, presented the Sabbath sermon. Ms. Liying Lin, a professional counselor, was also invited to lecture and was available for counseling.



*In September 2020 the Taiwan Conference held a retreat for ministerial spouses.*





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