

# THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

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**LIFE CRISES**



SCAN TO READ ONLINE

## ON THE COVER

The saying goes, “The only constant in life is change.” Many changes do not seem like positive ones when they happen to us. We may even feel that we are going through a full-blown crisis! We may face—in ourselves or our family—life-changing or life-limiting illness (mental or physical), loss of a job, disability, the death of a loved one, a major move, financial challenges, a crippling addiction, an empty nest, retirement, or other transitions. How do we cope with these situations? Articles in this issue provide practical, encouraging perspectives. They also remind us that God is with us and can bring good out of any and every crisis!



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# MEET *Aurora!*

## AURORA CANALS

has recently stepped into the role of associate ministerial secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, which includes serving Pastoral Spouses and Families. She is also the editor of *The Journal*. We asked her some big questions, and she answered with candor and grace.

### WHERE WERE YOU BORN, AURORA?

I was born in Barranquilla, Colombia. When I was 10, my parents decided to move to the United States of America. So I grew up in the beautiful state of New Jersey, which we call the Garden State.

### WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND YOUR BEAUTIFUL NAME?

My parents gave me the name Aurora because that was my grandmother's name. Aurora means dawn.

### WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL AND WHAT JOBS HAVE YOU HELD?

I graduated from Washington State University with a B.A. in business administration. I've had many jobs over the years, but the one I enjoyed the most was when I worked with my husband as an assistant evangelist in the Oregon Conference. However, since I come from a family that loves working with numbers, I guess accounting is in my DNA. I served in the Oregon Conference as an associate treasurer for 18 years. In March 2016 I began serving in the Chesapeake Conference as an associate treasurer in charge of payroll until I was elected at the GC Session.

### HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WORKING TOGETHER IN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENT?

I have always worked together with my husband in ministry. I have always considered his ministry as a calling for both of us. I worked with Ramon for a few years as his assistant when he served as a full-time evangelist and developer of the Hispanic work in the Oregon Conference. I enjoyed going out with him and my children knocking on doors, distributing literature, and inviting people to take Bible studies or attend evangelistic meetings. One of the things I enjoyed the most was teaching children and young people Bible lessons as we prepared them for baptism. As in any career, one of the challenges of working with your spouse is learning to respect boundaries between the ministry and the home. But one of the things we have learned over the years is to depend on God. He has been the center of our lives since we married, and that has been the key to the success of our marriage.

### HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR HUSBAND?

Ramon and I met in Paterson, New Jersey. He came to my house to give Bible studies to my uncle Nestor. Soon after Ramon began studying with Nestor, my father joined the Bible studies and brought the whole family with him. After several months of intense Bible studies, my entire family decided to get baptized and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As you can imagine, a friendly relationship developed between Ramon and me, and we have been happily married for 44 beautiful years. Ramon is very kind and loving, and I have always seen him as my role model. In the years I have been married to him, I have experienced his passion for serving the Lord and his love for sharing the gospel with people. In addition, he has been an excellent father to our children and grandchildren and very affectionate to me.



## Meet Aurora!

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

We have two adult children. Our son, Gabriel, graduated from Southwestern Adventist University with a major in communication. He works as an agency development manager and lives in the state of Oregon. Our daughter, Jessica, is a payroll consultant and lives in the state of Washington. We have three beautiful grandchildren, Braxton, Lucas, and Sammie. We are proud and thankful to God for our children and grandchildren, and we wish we could see them more often.

### WHAT IS AN EXPERIENCE YOU HAD THAT MADE YOU WISH YOU WEREN'T A PASTORAL SPOUSE?

When we were in college, Ramon brought me a list of pastoral spouse expectations! It turned out the list was prepared for single ministerial students who could use some counsel as they were seeking a spouse. But in college we were already married with two kids. Therefore, the list was not going to work for me. So at that point I wished I was not married to an aspiring pastor!

### WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST REACTION WHEN YOU WERE ASKED TO TAKE ON THIS NEW JOB?

I was surprised, shocked, and humbled. I was surprised I was being called to such an important ministry since I have spent most of my working life serving the church in treasury. But I count this call as an honor and am reminded that God does not call the qualified—He qualifies the one He calls. What makes me a little apprehensive is that this is a radical change for me. I do not consider myself a public speaker or writer. I have always helped my husband behind the scenes. Then suddenly being thrown into the spotlight can be frightening. But I am excited and encouraged that the One who called me will strengthen me. I am constantly reminded of Isaiah 41:10: “Don’t fear, because I am with you; don’t be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand” (CEB).

### WHAT IS AN EXPERIENCE YOU HAD WHEN YOU WERE THANKFUL TO BE A PASTORAL SPOUSE?

I was thankful to be a pastor’s wife when I was diagnosed with cancer and the church rallied together to pray for me, encourage me, and even bring food to my family after my surgery.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE PASTORAL SPOUSES?

Always keep a positive outlook on life, knowing that God called you and your family to serve Him and He will never leave nor forsake you. Always look at ministry not as one individual’s work but as a team’s work—and you are part of the team.

*Meet Aurora and Ramon Canals, newly elected General Conference ministerial leaders. “One of the things that makes me excited about this new responsibility is the opportunity to interact with people from around the world and to help support the crucial ministry of pastoral spouses,” says Aurora.*



### WITH GOD'S HELP, WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?

One of the things that makes me excited about this new responsibility is the opportunity to interact with people from around the world and to help support the crucial ministry of pastoral spouses. Here are some of the things we would like to accomplish by the will of God:

1. **PRAYER:** We would like to continue building on the spiritual foundation Jerry and Janet Page established. We believe prayer is the key to success in ministry and in everything we do for the Lord. Janet Page said something to me as she was passing on the baton: "Aurora, I did not know how to do many things when I began doing this, but one thing I do is pray like crazy. Pray, pray, pray, pray." By God's grace, we will continue building on that spiritual platform.

2. **TRAINING:** Pastoral spouses are expected to serve in ministry supporting their spouses. However, very little training is offered to help them accomplish their ministry. I want to work with my counterparts at the division level to evaluate current needs and develop a strategy to meet those needs.

3. **RESOURCES:** In collaboration with the divisions, we would like to produce resources that help meet the needs in the field.

4. **ENCOURAGE:** I want to encourage every ministerial spouse coordinator and ministerial spouse to continue serving the Lord, knowing that He is the One who called us together with our spouse.

### ANY LAST WORDS FOR PASTORAL SPOUSES IN THE FIELD?

1. Stay connected with Jesus through Bible study and prayer.
2. Love, pray for, and support your spouse.
3. Love and encourage the church family, even those who may not be so lovable.
4. Be a lifetime learner. Keep growing in the Lord.

## SHORT ANSWER

Food craving: Sweet foods like fruit and dessert

Top vacation spot: Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic

Hobbies: Gardening, planting flowers around my house, running, fast walking

Best song of all time: "Ancient Words"

Preferred item of clothing: A suit

Number-one saying: "I am OK!"

Favorite Ellen White quote: "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" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 10).

Bucket list item: My life has been terrific, so I don't have any bucket list. The only thing I want to do is to prepare myself and my family for heaven.





# “I’M READING YOUR LIPS”

**SUDDENLY KALLIE REALIZED SHE COULD HARDLY HEAR THE TALKING AROUND HER.**

*IT SOUNDS LIKE I’M UNDERWATER*, thought Kallie. Studying elementary education at Kansas State University, she struggled to hear her professors’ words in the lecture halls. Thinking she must have an ear infection, she called her doctor back home and received a couple rounds of antibiotics. It didn’t help, but she adjusted and put it out of her mind.

A few years later, now married to Jeremy and enjoying their newborn son, Cade, she discovered the issue hadn’t gone away. Jeremy noticed that

when Kallie slept on her right side, she didn’t hear the baby monitor. He told her, “You have to go to the ENT [ear, nose, and throat] specialist and find out what’s going on.”

Kallie remembers walking in with a snooty attitude, saying to herself, “I hope I don’t have to wear hearing aids.” At the end of the appointment she walked out humbled, saying, “Oh, I wish a hearing aid would fix this!”

The audiogram had revealed that Kallie was 100 percent deaf in her left ear and had significant hearing loss in her right ear. The specialist ordered an MRI, which showed the presence of two acoustic neuromas, nonmalignant tumors. Kallie was referred to a team of three more specialists—a neuro-otologist, a neurosurgeon, and an oncologist. They determined that radiation would be the best treatment, so a few weeks later Kallie underwent radiation on her left side. Eleven months later she had radiation on the right side in the hopes it would stop tumor growth.

During her medical consultations she also learned that bilateral acoustic neuromas usually indicate a genetic disorder called neurofibromatosis type 2 (NF2). She was tested, and the diagnosis was verified. She and Jeremy had their young son tested, and his results also came back positive. This confirmed that both Kallie and Cade have mutations in their NF2 genes, which regulate the production of a protein that functions as a tumor suppressor.

While there are treatments to manage symptoms, there is no cure. Kallie’s doctor told her, “You’ll be completely deaf by the time you’re 30. And people with this diagnosis often experience paralysis as tumors invade their spine and brain.”

## **HARD NEWS**

After hearing this news, and especially after her son’s diagnosis, Kallie felt scared, but the verse she clung



*Kallie poses with Daisy, a bottle calf her son, Cade, raised. She and her family love all things agriculture related.*

## *“God tells us He will handle our fear for us.”*

to—and continues to claim—is Deuteronomy 31:8: “The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

“God tells us He will handle our fear for us,” she says with conviction. “I went to Him time and time again, especially with our son. He has provided in His timing. I’m 35, and I’m not deaf. But however long I’m able to hear will be long enough, and I’m fulfilled knowing He will show me exactly how long is enough.”

Kallie says she also has “an army of prayer warriors.” She shares, “We crumble at times; we’re not always strong. But when we falter, we lean on like-minded individuals, people who have faith and can help pick us up when our faith is in the valley.”

Her husband, Jeremy, is one of those people for her and Cade. “He’s our rock,” she says. “Our life expectancy isn’t as long, and he took his vows before we knew I had this disorder, promising in sickness and in health. I can’t imagine being him, knowing that his two people won’t be around as long. But there hasn’t been even one time when he’s made me feel guilty. He’s the calm to my storm.”

She says Cade is also a huge inspiration and faith warrior. He was only 4 when he found out he had the same genetic disorder. He said to her, “Mama, we’re just going to give it to God.”

Even though Kallie is deaf in her left ear and has only 20 percent hearing in her right, she hears what’s important and lives by faith. ■



*Kallie says her husband, Jeremy, and son, Cade, keep her faith strong.*

**Kallie Fickes** and her husband, Jeremy, live in rural Nebraska, where they own Fickes Aerial and Ag Services and Jeremy manages the Farmers Pride Coop branch in Newman Grove. Kallie is a strong communicator, adept at reading lips and speaking about God’s goodness. Their son, Cade, is now 12 and wants to be a veterinarian.

## HOW TO HANDLE A DISABILITY

### KALLIE SHARES WHAT SHE’S LEARNED

- Advocate for yourself so you don’t feel left out. This gets easier as you do it.
- Utilize technology. Find group support on social media. And if you’re hearing impaired, there are many apps nowadays that will transcribe for you and turn conversations into closed captions. If you’re in a place with a loud background, you can get these apps right on your phone.
- Ask for help. People are always willing to help. When I fly by myself, I can’t hear the flight announcements in the noisy airport. So I sit by the kindest-looking people I can find and say, “I can’t hear well. Can you help me?”
- Figure out what you need to make your life work. For instance, I rely primarily on lip reading, so COVID mask mandates were very difficult for me. That pushed me to become braver and ask for accommodations. In public if I told the cashier, medical professional, or whomever I was interacting with that I was hearing impaired and heavily relied on lip reading, most of them automatically pulled their mask down to help with communication. Other times they would drastically increase the volume of their speech.
- Practice gratitude. Some events are particularly hard, like dinner conversations with friends at a restaurant with background noise. But if I can’t hear the dialogue, I just try to be grateful that I get to be in their company. Also, I thank God that this is the only disability I have. We know our bodies will deteriorate over time, so we better be grateful for today and not worry about tomorrow.
- Remember, you are only as disabled as you think you are. If you want to use it as a crutch, you can do that. You can be hung up by it or you can accept it. Your life is what you make of it.
- Be mentally strong. God will do the rest. He’s already gone before me, and I know He made me.





SCAN FOR AUDIO



# PRAISE GOD IN LOSS???

**MY HUSBAND LAY AT THE BOTTOM OF THE POOL,  
AND I THOUGHT I'D ENTERED A NIGHTMARE.**

MY HUSBAND, MIKE, AND I were serving in our first district pastoring a couple of churches. He had been busy all week doing Bible studies and visiting, so he decided to stay home one morning to work on his sermon.

Before he did that he said, "I'm going to go running. I haven't been exercising. I need to start running again."

It was July 3, a sweltering, muggy day in the Southeast United States. He came back from his run sweating. "I'm so hot," he said. "I think I'm going to go for a swim in the pool." We lived in an apartment complex with a swimming pool.

Tyson, our little toddler, said, "Me go too, Daddy. Me go too."

So Mike and Tyson went off to the pool. I stayed behind because I was trying to do some cooking. But it wasn't too long before Tyson was banging on the door crying.

"Tyson, what's the matter?" I asked.

"Daddy gone down. Gone down. Won't up. Won't up."

I grabbed Tyson and marched out to the pool, ready to scold Mike for leaving alone this 3-year-old who can't swim. But I got there to find a crowd of people standing around the deep end. As I parted them and said "What's wrong?" I saw my husband lying at the bottom of the pool.

I immediately jumped in to pull him out. As I tried to drag him to the edge of the pool, I thought, *This is a nightmare. I know this isn't real. This isn't happening to me. It's not a part of my life plan. We just got through school together, we're in the ministry and are going to serve God with our lives, and we have a little boy to raise.*



## *I decided, My God is in control of my life, so I choose to surrender it to Him.*

But in the emergency room the doctor came out and told me, “There’s nothing we can do. He’s gone.” They guessed that Mike, possibly trying to hold his breath for a long time, had passed out underwater and had a lung rupture.

In that moment I was so thankful for God’s Word. A verse came into my mind: “All things work together for good.”

### **GOOD? REALLY?**

Mike and I had attended a seminar six months before, and at the end they talked about praising God in all things. I thought, *Oh, I’ve heard that before. These guys are crazy.*

But the thought wouldn’t leave me alone. When I went home from the seminar, I started looking up the passages in Scripture they had given us and realized it was something I needed to do. So Mike and I started trying it, sometimes teasing each other.

Like the time he got a flat tire on the way to church and was out in the heat in a suit changing it. I leaned out the window and asked, “Are you praising God for the flat tire?” Or the time I worked hard to make a special dish and tripped and dropped it. He asked, “Are you praising God?” We joked with each other, but at the same time we were seriously trying to see if it made a difference.

Now, as the doctor told me Mike was gone, one of the key verses came into my mind: “All things work together for good.” I chose to start praising God—not that Mike had died but *in* the fact he had died. I decided, *My God is in control of my life, so I choose to surrender it to Him.*

That night the first person to show up was my brother. It was after midnight, and we went into my bedroom. I asked him, “Would you just stay here and talk to me till I go to sleep because when I close my eyes, I just see the horrible scene of my husband dead.”

My brother, still in his travel clothes, promptly fell asleep and started snoring. He was a pastor also and had been working hard. I didn’t want to disturb him, so I went into my little boy’s room. I crawled into the double bed next to him and shut my eyes, but the horrible scene came back. I looked up toward heaven and prayed, “God, I choose to praise You. For whatever reason You allowed this, so I choose to surrender the whole thing to You. But I think I need sleep. You’ve got to help me sleep. I’ve got to make decisions tomorrow. I’ve got to face church members.”

Before I could get that prayer out, I felt like I was being held. Peace came over me, and I slept the whole night.

As I woke up the next morning, I thought, *This has been a terrible nightmare.* I reached out for my husband, but instead it was my little boy there, and I knew it was real.

When I had called my parents the day before and told them what had happened, they said, “Don’t do anything. Don’t make any decisions till we get there.” They lived three states away. I don’t know what they thought I was going to do. We owned a canoe and a rusty VW. That was it. We had no money. I guess they were afraid I would be talked into having a fancy funeral that I couldn’t afford. So I tried to be the obedient daughter and wait for them to come.

Yet I couldn’t sit still. I paced back and forth in the apartment just thanking God for the six years I’d known Mike (five years married), for the fun times we’d had together skiing and camping and backpacking, for the people we’d seen won to the Lord during Bible studies, for the little boy I’d had by him. Whatever I could, I was thanking God for.

As I paced back and forth, my brother, sitting on the couch, said, “You know, Janet, Mike died a young man, and you’re probably going to die an old woman. How’s he going to recognize you in heaven?”

I got out my Bible, quickly turned to the New Testament, and said, “I’ll be changed in the twinkling of an eye!”

He responded, “OK, you’re changed, he’s changed. How are you going to recognize each other because you’re sure going to look a whole lot better than you do now!”

I thought about that. Mike had this crazy way of walking, so I said, “God will never take that away from him. That was his personality. I’ll find him in heaven by that walk.”

### MIRACLES

Lying on the table by the couch was a devotional book of Ellen White's writings called *This Day With God*. I felt the urge, *Pick it up and read it*. It was July 4. But then I thought, *I don't want to read. I can't concentrate*. I never thought to ask, "God, are You telling me to pick this up?" At that time in my life I didn't know that God would speak to me, so it never even crossed my brain that it was God.

We had a memorial service. I'm not saying in all this that it's not OK to weep and cry over our loved ones. We know Jesus weeps with us. But as Seventh-day Adventists we have a blessed hope. We have something even in our funerals to rejoice about, so we made Mike's memorial service a time of rejoicing. We sang songs about the Second Coming and about our Jesus, who died on the cross for us. Neighbors who attended said, "Tell us what you believe. We want to know a God who can give us such peace and hope."

My parents and my brother stayed by as long as they could afterward to help me pack up the apartment. I didn't have an income, so I needed to move. When they left to get back to work, I had just one place to pack up before the mover came: a garage where we had stuff in storage.

After morning worship the day before the mover would arrive, I decided to read *This Day With God*. It was now July 14, and I started reading the devotional for that date. It was so good that I kept reading page after page, but then I glanced at the clock. *Oh, it's getting late*, I thought. *The mover's going to be upset with me if I'm not ready*. I took the book and turned it upside down on July 18 and 19 and left it on the end table by my bed because I wanted to come back and read it that night.

Then I grabbed Tyson and off to the garage we went. As I packed up tools and other items there, I felt overwhelmed with how much I missed Mike. I cried out, "God, why? Why did You let him die? We were going to serve You together in the ministry. How am I going to raise my little boy without his daddy?"

All day long I packed and sobbed. When we got back to the apartment, Tyson was asleep. I put him in his bed and flopped across my bed crying. Then this urge came over me, *Pick up that book and read it*.

I said to myself, "I don't want to read it. I'm miserable. I want to cry." But the urge wouldn't leave me alone, and I decided, *Well, it's kind of getting boring crying. I've been crying all day, and I'm pretty well cried out. I might as well pick up the book and read it because it was good this morning*.

I'm the kind of person who if I leave my things a certain way, I don't want anyone to touch them. I will notice. When I picked up the book, it was no longer where I left it open on July 18 and 19. *Who's touched my book? Who's been in here?* Nobody had a key but me, and I knew my little guy hadn't touched it.

I glanced down, and the book was open to July 4 and 5. The title on July 4 was "Jesus Cares." The verse was "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7, KJV). I started reading the page, and in that first paragraph it said, "God, your heavenly Father, will be your husband at hand, to counsel, to direct, and comfort as you need." Then it quoted Lamentations 3:33: "For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (KJV).



# *Stop telling God how big your storm is and start telling your storm how big your God is!*

I looked down at the bottom of the page because I wanted to know why Ellen White wrote this devotional. It said: “Letter 42, written July 4, 1875, to a sister who had recently lost her husband.”

*How does God do that?* I wondered. *Does He just zap it? Does He send an angel to turn to that page?* I don’t know how He did it, but I know He did. And I can’t wait till heaven to find out.

In that last paragraph it said, “Cling to His hand; hold fast. He will take you, your children, and all your griefs and burdens if you will only cast them all upon Him” (p. 194).

One of the things I love about God’s Word is that as much as you read it, when you’re in a crisis or you’ve got a problem, new things will stand out to you. God started showing me all these Scriptures promising that He would be my husband, that He’s a husband to the widows and a father to the fatherless. I’d never noticed those in Scripture before.

## **LIFE INSURANCE**

The night before my parents left, we were sitting on the couch. We’d been packing boxes all day, and Dad said to me, “I don’t know how you’re going to make it, but at least you’ve got that life insurance policy to tide you over for a while.”

Even as a little kid I’d heard all these horror stories about what happened to people if they didn’t have life insurance. So when we had the baby, I said to Mike, “We’ve got to get life insurance.”

My husband said, “I don’t need that.” But I kept nagging him, and we got the insurance. Then when we had our son, I felt called to stay home with the baby. At that time we were interning and were not making it financially. I knew I could get a job as a nurse, but I wanted to stay home with my little one. So I sat down one day and looked at the numbers.

When Mike came home that night from his Bible studies I showed him: “I figured this all out, and if we cut out this, cut out that, do this, do that, cut out that life insurance policy, and eat really carefully, I think we can make it financially so I can stay home with our kid.”

Mike said, “Do it. I never wanted the life insurance anyway. I’m going to be translated. Jesus is coming!”

Wait till I see that man in heaven! Do I have something to tell him!

Well, my father didn’t know all this. When I told him, “Dad, I don’t have the policy anymore,” he came off the couch. “What?”

“I canceled it because we weren’t making it.”

“Why didn’t you tell your mom and me?” he said. “We both work. We could have carried the policy for a while.”

I ran into the bedroom crying, knelt by my bed, and said, “God, I tried to do what I thought was right, to stay home with my baby, not go in debt, try to meet our financial needs. Look at the mess I’m in. Lord, I really think this is Your problem.”

And do you know what started happening? From all over the United States and Canada, people started sending me money. Some of them were people I had been in college with, and they sent me large amounts of money. I knew they couldn’t afford it, so I sent it back. They turned around and sent it back again and said, “Look, God told us to send this to you. We don’t want it. You keep it.”

I journaled all of this. I wrote down everything that came in because I was so grateful for it, but I never added it up.

A year later I was having my devotions one morning and suddenly got this urge: *Add up what’s come in to you.* I thought, *That’s really rude, thinking about money when I’m trying to spend time with God.* I tried to avoid the urge, but it kept coming. Finally I got out the notebook and started adding up all that had come in. It totaled—to the very penny—what that life insurance had been worth. To the exact penny!



I don't know what you're worried about in your life, what you're worried about in the future, but your God is big enough to take care of you!

Nine months before Mike died, my parents had moved into a new house. When they had the house built, they had a choice between a two-bedroom, three-bedroom, or four-bedroom. The kids were gone and it was only the two of them, so they decided to build a two-bedroom because they thought it was poor stewardship to have a bigger home. But they had this urge, *Build a four-bedroom*. They finally gave in to it, but they were embarrassed and didn't tell anybody. They kept asking God, "Why do we have a four-bedroom house?"

When my husband died, they knew why they had a four-bedroom house. Even before I knew I had a problem, God was already working on the solution. That's our God. It's just amazing what He does in our lives.

About a year after Tyson and I moved in with my parents, my grandmother fell and broke her hip and her wrist. My mom volunteered for me to take care of her so she wouldn't have to go into a nursing home. So I went south and stayed with Grandma and took care of her for several months. When she was getting well, an aunt was going to come and take my place.

The day before I was to leave, Grandma wanted to get into the sunshine and fresh air, so I took her outside and wrapped her in blankets because it was cool. She was the kind of person who never complained about anything. It drove me crazy. She wouldn't even give an opinion about what she wanted to eat. Just "whatever you want to fix, Janet." She was a good woman.

As I got her settled in the sunshine, she said, "Janet, I need to talk to you. Sit down next to me."

I thought, *Finally Grandma's going to talk to me straight . . . tell me I'm raising my kid wrong. Anything. Just talk to me.* So I sat down and said, "Yeah, Grandma."

"Janet," she began, "I want you to know that I'm praying for God to bring you a nice young Christian minister."

"Oh, Grandma, I had one," I responded. "Tell Him to bring me a nice young Christian rich man!"

Grandma wouldn't laugh. She looked at me and pointed her finger at me. "Janet, you're going to get a minister, and that's what you're going to marry!"

Not too long after that God brought Jerry into my life. Jerry, a minister! He's nothing like my first husband, but he's absolutely what I needed, and what a blessing he is. When he asked me to marry him, I said, "Jerry, I'm not sure you can be the husband that God has been to me!" But he's really done a pretty good job.

Friends, don't miss out on the blessing God wants to give by thanking Him only for the things you think are blessings. Thank Him for everything that happens. Stop telling God how big your storm is and start telling your storm how big your God is! Proclaim God's Word over that problem. Talk about how big your God is, how faithful He is, how He'll move His right arm in your path.

In *The Ministry of Healing* Ellen White writes: "The Father's presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. Whatever comes to him comes from the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Nothing can touch him except by the Lord's permission. All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, in short, all things work together for our good. All experiences and circumstances are God's workmen whereby good is brought to us" (pp. 488, 489). J

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*Janet Page recently retired from serving as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer. Her husband, Jerry, also retired from his recent post as ministerial secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. They are enjoying spending time with their six adorable grandchildren and their two sons and their wives.*



# Special Quotes

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.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 474

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

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 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

Begin to educate your tongues to praise Him, and train your hearts to make melody to God; and when the evil one begins to settle his gloom about you, sing praise to God. When things go crossways at your homes, strike up a song about the matchless charms of the Son of God, and I tell you, when you touch this strain, Satan will leave you.

—*Review and Herald*, Aug. 5, 1900



## SHARING THE *love*

### HOW TO NAVIGATE LIFE WHEN TWO BECOME THREE . . .

I SAT ON THE FLOOR, surrounded by diapers and baby toys. It was time to start preparing dinner, and I was still in my nightclothes. All day long I had been feeding and changing a fussy baby. Now, before I could start cooking, I had to get washed and dressed and take our tiny baby into town to buy food.

I sighed. I was too tired to move. I didn't want to go anywhere. I just wanted to sleep. More than anything, I needed someone to come and take care of me so I could have enough strength to take care of our infant. *Is this it?* I thought. *Is this what it means to be a mother? Sheer, mind-numbing, body-wringing exhaustion?*

Most mothers are conditioned through nine months of pregnancy to be totally focused on their helpless infant. The baby is their main priority, and making sure their little one is comforted, fed, loved, clean, laughing, healthy, and happy can take many hours of caring attention. It's not easy to do all this on your own. Furthermore, many new mothers experience postnatal depression after the birth because of hormonal changes, multiple responsibilities, disillusionment, exhaustion, and a lack of social and family support.

Fathers can also feel confused. If their wives ask for help, they don't always know what to do with a baby. They may feel very competent when they are at work but useless when they are at home. They come home tired from a long workday and just want to rest. Or they're concerned they'll be too tired to do their job if they have to attend to the baby during the night.





## *I was too tired to move. I just wanted to sleep.*

My husband, Bernie, was running a Revelation seminar shortly after the birth of our first child. I guess we naively thought life would carry on as usual, even though we had a young baby! So he encouraged me to come along and show my support to the local church.

For one week I prepared our baby to go out every evening. I sat in a side room at church, feeding and changing her. She was tired and fussy. I felt like a mess. I couldn't focus on the lessons. I was exhausted. She didn't want to sleep, and if she did, as soon as we got home she woke up and it took another two hours to settle her again. Life was no longer normal. It was much too disruptive to my life and my baby's routine to go to a midweek evening church program every night.

It's easy for husbands to feel rejected after the birth of the baby. They're no longer the focus of their wife's attention, and they need to shift their expectations. When I was nursing my babies, my body was often too tired or too overstimulated from hours of physical contact with them to be touched by Bernie. I loved him, and I wanted to be hugged and cared for, but I felt like my body wasn't my own anymore. It seemed to belong more to my babies than to me or Bernie, so we struggled.

### **LET'S STICK TOGETHER**

It's all too easy for each partner to feel resentful and uncared for. Instead of their new baby deepening the bond between them, their new role as co-parents can often threaten their relationship and distract them from loving each other well.

Harry Benson promotes Christian marriage and family values through relevant research, writing, and

teaching. His desire to strengthen families comes from his own steep learning curve. When he and his wife, Kate, had very young children, Harry was immersed in his work. Kate became increasingly lonely and resentful as she cared for the home and the family with very little input, encouragement, or support from Harry. One day she hit rock bottom and almost walked away from the marriage.

Now, many years later, they teach brand-new parents the skills for staying close and strong through the ups and downs of life with babies and toddlers. You can read some of their experience in their book *Let's Stick Together: The Relationship Book for New Parents*.

When Harry asked a significant number of new mothers what they most wanted from their husbands, 95 percent wanted him to be a friend, 97 percent wanted him to be interested in her as a person and show that her needs are important to him, and 98 percent wanted him to take an active interest in the children, playing with them, caring for their everyday needs, and being significantly and positively involved in their lives.


The kind of love that mothers need is active. It's not just a warm and loving glow in the heart—it needs to be expressed in practical ways. They need their husband to be a caring friend and a supportive companion in this challenging journey of parenting a newborn. Babies are 100 percent dependent on their parents for 100 percent of the time. That's an intense degree of work, day after day. Mothers need to be topped up by the father with loving care and joy and peace so it can bubble over into the home and every relationship.

### **TRY THIS**

Here are some suggestions from new parents who are learning to navigate this new stage in their relationship:

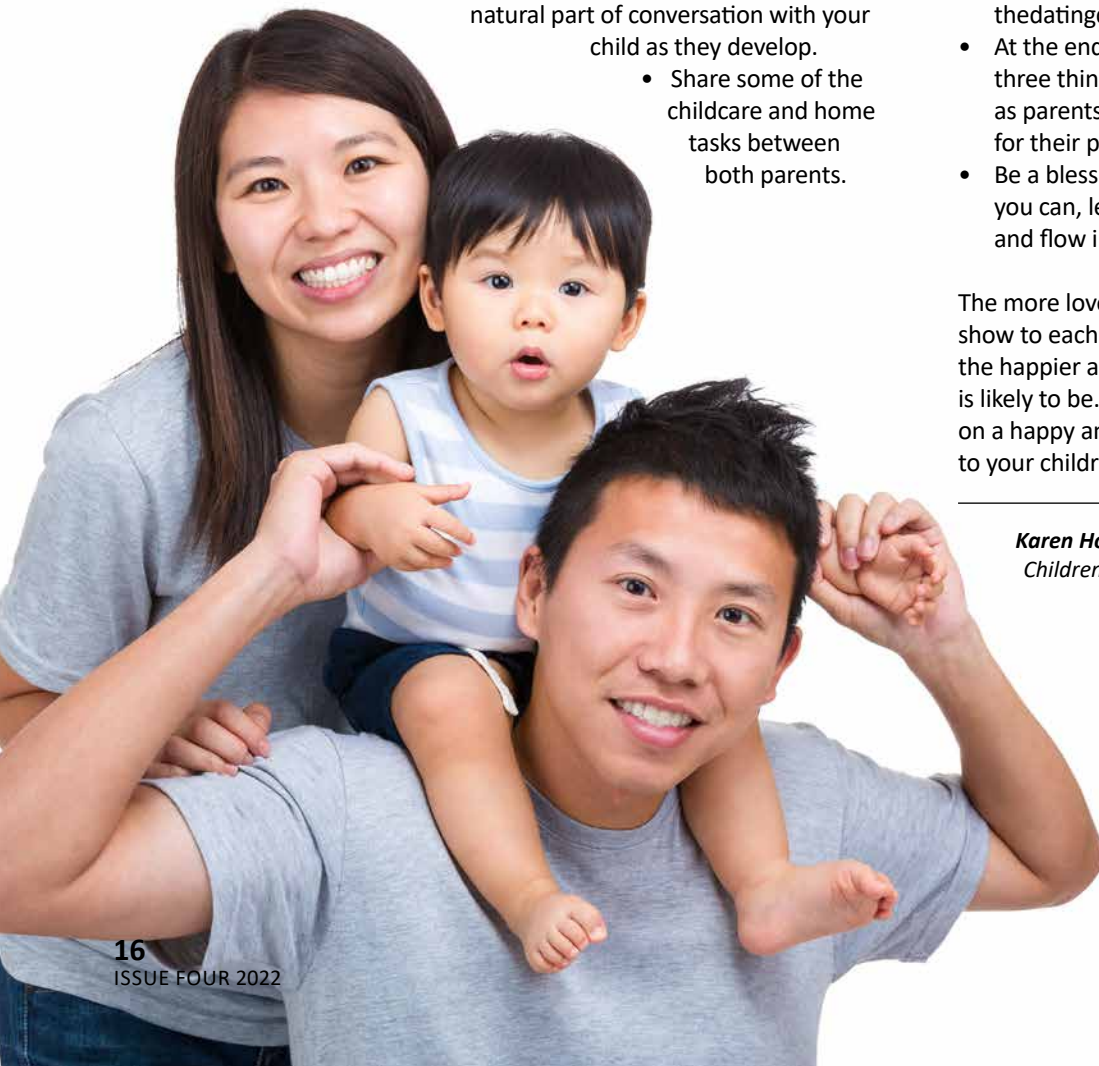
- Ask your spouse for three things you can pray about for them every day. Then say a simple prayer for each other or hold hands while you pray silently for the other person's requests.

- Study a short book like Philippians. Write one or two verses on a sheet of paper and add your reflections throughout the day. Read your notes together at bedtime.
- Set aside regular time to talk about each of your current joys and challenges.
- Empathize with each other's emotions: "It sounds like you are feeling . . . Help me to understand more about that and how I can help you."
- Write a list of ways you can show care to each other in five minutes or less and try to do some of these every day.
- Take turns telling your spouse what you appreciate about them as a spouse and parent.
- Create a daily routine together for the baby so both you and your spouse know what needs to be done when and how to do it.
- Have a short worship with your baby at the same time each day. Sing a happy song, read a Bible verse from a picture book written for babies, and say a very short prayer. Talk about God as you go about your everyday activities so it becomes a natural part of conversation with your child as they develop.
  - Share some of the childcare and home tasks between both parents.
- Take time to play with your baby every day. Give them your full attention, smiles, and eye contact. Play simple and safe, repetitive games with them.
- Swap roles occasionally so the parent who is less involved with the baby experiences what it's like to care for a baby all day.
- Show care and kindness as often as possible to bring love and joy into the home. Your baby will benefit from the peaceful and caring atmosphere you create.
- Dads, show your wife that she is still the number one priority in your life. Surprise her with acts of thoughtful love and service.
- Take time to have fun and relax together as friends. It takes more creativity when you have a baby. Go for a walk together and chat while baby sleeps, buy a ready-made meal you can eat together at home, and make a list of fun things you can do in an hour at home. Find creative ideas for all kinds of free dates at [www.thedatingdivas.com](http://www.thedatingdivas.com).
- At the end of each day, write down three things each of you have done well as parents, and appreciate your spouse for their part in the parenting.
- Be a blessing to each other as often as you can, letting God's love fill your heart and flow into your marriage and home.

The more love, kindness, and support you show to each other at this challenging time, the happier and stronger your relationship is likely to be. In this way you can also pass on a happy and healthy model of family life to your children. 

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**Karen Holford** is the Family, Women's and Children's Ministry Director for the Trans-European Division.



# TIPS TO ~~SURVIVE~~

## THRIVE



SCAN FOR AUDIO

### WE HAVE A CALL

"WE HAVE A CALL!" exclaimed my husband.

"Where to?" I asked.

When he responded, "To Singapore in the Far Eastern Division," I said, "Let's go!" We had commented many times that this was a field where we would like to serve.

One of the many details that would need to happen before our departure was the sale of our house. One day we had an out-of-state phone call from a woman I'll refer to as Mrs. Smith. She asked many questions about our house, but she didn't call back, so we thought it was just an inquiry.


My husband had to go to Singapore ahead of the children and me to attend the Far Eastern Division's year-end meetings. My mother volunteered to stay with the children so I could join him after that at the Institute of World Mission prior to our scheduled departure date. But the sale of the house was a concern to me. I didn't want my mom to have to take phone calls about the house, deal with the price with prospective buyers, get it ready for showing (perhaps several times), and so on.

So I prayed that if it was God's will that we sell the house before we moved, He would allow it to sell while I was still at home. That way, if a phone call came about the house after I left, Mom could simply say, "It is sold." If it wasn't His will, we would leave it with a real estate agent.

Only a few days before leaving to attend the Institute of World Mission, I set a date for a day of fasting and prayer about the house sale. I did all my work away from home the day before so I could be at home on my special day in order to have the whole day for uninterrupted prayer.

While I was at home praying, a phone call came through. It was Mrs. Smith. She started out by saying, "Oh, I'm so glad you're home! I tried all day yesterday to reach you but was unsuccessful. My husband and I prayed that if it was God's will that we buy your house, I would be able to reach you today. If I couldn't, it would be a sign from Him that it was not to be. I'm so glad to be able to speak to you because we want to buy your house."


They bought it sight unseen for the asking price. Isn't God wonderful? He cares about us; He loves us, and when our requests are according to His will, He grants them! I believe He is "up there" eagerly watching, just waiting to see our happiness when we see what He has done for us! I also believe that one of His favorite things to do is to answer His children's prayers. "Before they call I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24).

The new post of duty was a blessing to the whole family. It was one of the highlights of our entire ministry! 

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





**"WHATEVER YOU  
DO, DO WELL. FOR  
WHEN YOU GO TO  
THE GRAVE, THERE  
WILL BE NO WORK  
OR PLANNING OR  
KNOWLEDGE OR  
WISDOM."**

**ECCLESIASTES 9:10, NLT**

# Hands

SCAN FOR AUDIO



**I AM A HOSPICE NURSE.** While many moments stand out with intense meaning in the work that I do, I always seem to notice hands. I can see, sense, and feel the work, love, pain, strength, longing, vulnerability, and passion of an entire lifetime in an individual's hands. They tell me the story of that person's life.

## **MUSIC**

I arrived at a hospice patient's home for a time-of-death visit. Her hands were translucent white. I folded them across her still and silent chest, and they fit perfectly together. I noticed the sinew of her long, thin fingers.

"Her hands are so beautiful," I said quietly.

"She was a classical violinist," her husband murmured as tears filled his eyes. He pointed to a case in the corner of the room. "She loved her violin." He scrolled through his phone, and soon the most splendid song filled the room. I heard the violin solo and knew she was the one performing it.

As her body began to cool and stiffen in the room, the perfect violin solo continued. We stood together by her bedside, looking at her hands. I saw his face caught in memory while mine was caught in imagining how her lovely fingers caressed and held her violin and bow. I could sense her accomplishment and his wonder at her mastery.

When the song ended, I thanked him for sharing her beautiful song with me.

## **FOOD**

I knocked on the blue front door to see a patient with a changing condition.

The woman who answered the door invited me into the home decorated with images of Greek Islands. "Yiayai is in her bedroom," she told me.

## *She opened her eyes and grabbed my hand.*

I followed her past the kitchen, noting the Greek Kalas brand salt on the stove and the blue-and-white checked placemats on the table. She led me down the hallway decorated with Greek key wallpaper.

We entered a room where Yiayai was lying in bed resting, her eyes closed. As I came near to her, she opened her eyes and grabbed my hand. Her fingertips were flat, her nails cut short, sunspots freckling her dry skin. She gripped my hand firmly with her huge hand, smiling through missing teeth and hairy lips. She did not speak much English, but her daughter explained to her that I was there to check on her. I took my time listening to her heartbeat, admiring the strength of her hand as she continued to clasp mine.

I asked her daughter if Yiayai was a good cook, and she told me her mother had grown all her own vegetables and cooked everything fresh from the garden. She described the wonderful breads, pastries, and pastas Yiayai would knead and cut on her wooden boards. She would sift homegrown spices through her fingers.

I could smell and taste it all by the feel of her grip, by the freckles on her hands, by the protruding veins. Her life work was in her hands.

When I finished my assessment, she put my hand between both of hers and patted it. She closed her eyes and let go. I didn't want her to. I felt safe, cared for, nurtured, mentored by her large hands.

### **FORGIVENESS**

I was called to an assisted living facility because a patient had fallen twice in the past two days. Upon my arrival, the caregiver explained that she was found face-down on the floor in her apartment.

She was sitting up in her recliner now, brows furrowed, light blue eyes focused on mine. I asked her if she was in pain, and she muttered a word I did not immediately understand. I began to look at her face and assess for any signs of head injury from her fall.

Her cornflower blue eyes bored into mine, and she muttered "forgiveness."

I squatted down in front of her, and she reached out for my hand. "I need forgiveness," she said.

I asked her if she would like me to contact a chaplain, but she shook her head. "I need forgiveness *now*."

She reached out her other hand, and I took it in mine. Her touch was gentle yet strong. I said a brief prayer to myself: "Lord, please help me to know what to do in this situation."

I noticed a Bible on the nightstand, and the words came to me. I said, "You are forgiven. That's what the Bible says. When you ask for forgiveness, you are forgiven."

Her hands squeezed mine. She looked at me through moist blue eyes and said, "Thank you, thank you so much."

I asked her if she would like me to pray with her, and she nodded. I prayed, asking God for forgiveness and for her pain to be taken from her. I asked for her to be surrounded by love and her angels.

When I finished praying and opened my eyes, her face and body had completely relaxed. I remained kneeling in front of her, her hands in mine, watching the peace on her face. As I gently released her hands, she folded them in her lap in prayer.

## *His whole life was in his gently folded hands.*

### FATHER

In the filtered light coming through the shade, I could see the shape of another hospice patient, but this time it was my father. His breathing was irregular, his eyes closed. As I took in the scene in the room where he would die, I noticed his familiar face, the bump on his nose, the ever-present slight grin on his lips. I gave him a gentle kiss and could feel his rough facial stubble on my cheek.

I sat down beside him, and my tearful gaze was drawn to his hands effortlessly folded over his lap. I could see his entire life in those hands, marked by sun and age spots I knew so well. He earned those marks working in the tobacco fields as a child, picking blueberries in the summer sun as a young man, building tents before camp meeting as a pastor.


I saw his capable, productive fingers punching out sermons on his manual typewriter, driving a stick shift as he gracefully slid into overdrive, rebuilding an engine on his VW, chopping wood, skillfully navigating a canoe, painting our house, and burning everything he could on burn days. Every summer of my childhood he'd load our tent, sleeping bags, camp cots, and Coleman stove into the car and then set up camp somewhere in nature for a family vacation.

I could see the patience in his hands, holding a peanut until a chipmunk felt safe enough to take it from his fingers and pushing the grandkids on the swings until they fell asleep or finally said they'd had enough.

I saw the love in his hands and remembered how he gently held my babies, shook his members' hands after church, carried my suitcase, opened doors, cared for my declining mother, and dialed my phone number every Friday night to chat.

I saw his life purpose in his hands. He folded them in prayer for all of us. He held his Bible lovingly, fingertips gently turning the pages. His hands tucked his red-and-blue highlighter pencil behind his ear after marking his favorite passages. He dedicated children to God, baptized souls, laid tile on the church roof, assisted those in need, comforted the sick and downtrodden.

His whole life was in his gently folded hands. A life that was complete. They were twisted and thin and mottled and cooling, but his life blood still flowed through the veins, and his hands still brought healing, hope, and love.

Capable hands, comforting hands, hands that tell the story of a life. 

---

***Teri Pollard** is a hospice nurse in Pacific, Washington. Her father pastored in Ohio, New Jersey, and California. He prayed her through nursing school and many other challenges.*



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# HIS FACE IN THE

# Stars

WHY SEEING OUR SAVIOR WILL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

MY MIDDLE CHILD AND I lay with our heads pressed together on a pillow outside cherishing the rare, uninterrupted time. Our hearts reached out to each other as we talked of God. The Milky Way sparkled above us, the Big Dipper was trying to catch the sun that had disappeared over the mountain, and a shooting star darted by.

This creative child asked question after question regarding the Lord and our lives. Many times I had to say, "I don't know; we'll have to ask when we get to heaven."

After another round of questions I could not answer, she gazed silently upward. Then cuddling closer, she said, "Oh, never mind; I'll ask God when I get there."


I was grateful my little 7-year-old worrier felt confident of her heavenly destination.

"Actually," she interrupted my thoughts, "I sometimes think I won't have to ask God anything . . ." After another star-loaded pause, she continued: "Sometimes I think that when I see His face, I will understand sooo much! I think when I look at Him, I will be able to see so many things and I'll just, you know, see the answers."

## ANSWERS

My stunned mind regarded the wonder of that statement. Who in the world would come up with a thought like that? How did she decide that God's face was so full of information?

Her little starlit sermon continued. "I mean, really, Mommy, remember that lady that was so sick and all she had to do was touch His robe? I mean, if just touching His robe could do so much, can you imagine what looking on His face will do for us?"

Again silence reigned. For her, the silence was about snuggling and stargazing. For me, it was about wonder, love, and the absolute knowledge that we do, indeed, need to become as little children to understand the complete awesomeness of God. 

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*Carol Bovee is a wife, mother, teacher, cancer caregiver, writer, lover of music and nature, and child of the King who longs for heaven, where there will be joy in the presence of our Father! Used by permission from the devotional Help! I'm a Parent: Christian Parenting in the Real World edited by Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra. Published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015.*





# NEVER MIND

WE MIGHT NOT WANT TO TALK ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY,  
BUT IT'S ALL AROUND US.

MY HUSBAND WAS A PORN ADDICT FOR YEARS. I learned with relief that this ended before we were married and he no longer struggled with the addiction. But I was also naïve, thinking our situation was an isolated case.

As I started researching the topic, I began to understand how prevalent pornography is. I thought, *If all of the statistics are true, there must be a significant number of Christians in our congregations who actively struggle with this.* Indeed, many Christians battle with porn, and not just the regular churchgoer but also those in leadership positions.

What is surprising is that a growing number of people in the secular world are starting to recognize its disastrous effects. If the secular world is able to acknowledge this, shouldn't we as Christians also face this problem happening right in front of our eyes?

There are many legitimate reasons we don't acknowledge it. Maybe we're preoccupied with our own issues or naïve like I was about how prevalent it actually is. We might feel incapable of addressing such a heavy topic; we simply don't know what to do about it. Regardless of the reasons, I want to share three major facts every pastoral spouse should know about pornography. This knowledge can give us courage to help our church families transform from hopelessness to healing.

## THE PORN PROBLEM IS GETTING WORSE.

This is a result of its frequency, nature, and pervasiveness.

**Frequency:** Pornography use is happening at a much higher rate compared to years ago. The internet allows 24/7 access to unlimited content compared to the magazines and videotapes of the past. In May 2021, there was more traffic on porn sites than on Twitter, Instagram, Netflix, Pinterest, and LinkedIn combined.<sup>1</sup>

## *Accountability in a safe community has to be a central part of every addict's recovery plan.*

**Nature:** The nature of porn is significantly more violent and depraved than in the past. Numerous research studies suggest that pornography viewing is linked to sexual aggression, rape, and violent sexual crime.<sup>2</sup> Pornography is also linked to sex trafficking and child sexual abuse.<sup>3</sup>

**Pervasiveness:** The disastrous effects of pornography impact the old, young, men, women, Christian, and non-Christian alike. According to one research study, 41 percent of Christian males and 13 percent of Christian females between the ages of 13-24 are actively seeking porn at least once or twice a month. When it comes to the leadership of the church, the study found this: "Most pastors (57%) and youth pastors (64%) admit they have struggled with porn, either currently or in the past."<sup>4</sup>

### **PEOPLE ACTUALLY GAIN FREEDOM.**

We need to spread hope in this dark world—people do overcome pornography addiction! Online tracking programs, brain-based internet apps, and management of triggers all help people to maintain freedom. In addition to those very practical tools, here is what a Christian can do:

**Seek accountability.** "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment" (Proverbs 18:1, NKJV). For Traylor Lovvorn, accountability with fellow believers played a major role in his recovery. He was delivered from a life of sex addiction in which porn, various affairs, and other indiscretions were a part of his life for 25 years. His testimony shows us the power of community. Now he lives a life free in Christ and serves as a regular contributor to the Christian-based pornography recovery website *Covenant Eyes*. When a struggling Christian exposes their sin to a trusted believer who can walk the journey of freedom with them through Scripture and prayer, sin loses its power. Accountability in a safe community has to be a central part of every addict's recovery plan.

**Deal with the root cause.** "Search me, O God, and know my heart; . . . and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24, NKJV). Mike Genung's testimony is a powerful illustration of how facing the trauma in one's past can lead to freedom. Pornography was just one of his many vices. Over the years, he became a full-blown sex addict. Frequenting prostitutes was commonplace. However, once he gained the courage to acknowledge his feelings about being sexually abused by a family member, he was able to see the hole in his heart that only Christ could fill. This process of soul-searching is a common theme among many overcomers. They recognize that childhood trauma, early exposure to explicit materials, loneliness, and broken relationships are often the source of the issue. For Mike, his soul-searching exposed the lies that he was inherently rejected, worthless, and unloved. Soon God's truth about who he was in Christ illuminated his heart, and healing began to take place. When an addict gives God permission to search their heart, they can make significant steps in gaining freedom.

**Pursue Christ wholeheartedly.** "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13, NKJV). One exasperating day as my husband battled with his urges, he confessed his helplessness to God and pleaded for help. He soon became resolute to "make not provision for the flesh" (Romans 13:14, KJV). He says it was the combination of being completely honest with God, his own personal effort, and God's supernatural power that led to his deliverance. For the Christian who overcomes, it is the staunch decision to pursue Christ with every ounce of their being that leads to victory. This was not an easy journey for my husband. It was a long road of uprooting years of sinful habits and learning new ones. However, his healing is both complete and ongoing, as sanctification is a work of a lifetime.



## RESOURCE LIST

- **newfreedomtolove.org** Created to bring awareness to the pornography issue, this Seventh-day Adventist program provides tools, seminars, and resources for churches. There's a five-part video series that includes powerful testimonials to encourage hope for an addict.
- **blazinggrace.org** This powerful ministry was started by a former sex addict who is passionate about people experiencing healing from sex and porn addiction. The website includes powerful stories, articles, and programs. It also has a national prayer group that supports wives of porn addicts.
- **covenanteyes.com** This Christian-based organization has a plethora of resources, including testimonials of recovering porn addicts and many helpful articles. It also offers a tool that tracks your internet browsing and notifies a loved one if you visit an inappropriate website.
- **joinfortify.com** This evidenced-based app uses accountability and scientific principles to help porn users to overcome their addiction. There are testimonials and opportunities to volunteer to be an "ally" or accountability partner.
- **thefreedomfight.org** This Christian-based recovery program focuses on understanding the role of the brain, as well as the importance of accountability and building new habits. It was created after its founder evaluated over 20 sex recovery programs.

### YOU CAN HELP, HEAL, AND GIVE HOPE.

Shame is what keeps people from sharing their stories. Our hearts ought to be open and compassionate without any hint of condemnation or offering cliché answers when people confide in us. I think of this powerful Bible verse: "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1, 2).

Here are other practical ways we can help:

1. **Be an accountability partner.** Choose to meet weekly with a person of the same gender to check in with them. Your encouragement, support, and prayer can be a major motivation in their road to healing.
2. **Listen and process.** You may not be a professional counselor, but just listening and helping someone process the root of why they are struggling can be an opportunity for epiphanies and healing to occur. Confidentiality is a must.
3. **Seek resources.** Numerous resources exist to help people overcome pornography addiction. Making these resources readily available is a practical way to help someone on their road to healing.
4. **Pray.** The power of the Holy Spirit comes when we ask Him. Consider praying and claiming scripture for and with those who are battling. You could also start a private prayer group specifically dealing with addictions. We must never, for

a moment, underestimate what God can do through the power of prayer.

Now, what if your spouse is the one addicted to pornography? Silently bearing this burden may be one of the most heart-wrenching trials of your life. The strength to bear comes through prayer. In the book *Pray Big*, Cindy Mercer shares her testimony illustrating what God can do when we pray. Cindy faced the reality of an imminent divorce after finding out that her husband, Rick, was addicted to smoking, alcohol, drugs, and pornography. A close Christian friend encouraged her to pray. This slowly turned into a consistent early-morning prayer session for Rick. Other Christian friends joined in praying for him. After seven years of frequent, bitter, and tear-filled prayers, she saw God work a miracle in delivering her husband from every addiction that held him hostage!

The issue of pornography is a complex one with no easy answers. One thing we know for sure: Jesus has overcome the world, and He will see us through to the end. As we join together in prayer, we are to faithfully uphold Jesus Christ, the sin-bearing Savior who alone can transform us all from hopeless to healed. J

<sup>1</sup> [semrush.com/blog/most-visited-websites/](http://semrush.com/blog/most-visited-websites/)

<sup>2</sup> Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, and Ashley Kraus, "A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies," *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 1 (February 2016): 183–205.

<sup>3</sup> [thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Thorn\\_Survivor\\_Insights\\_090519.pdf](http://thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Thorn_Survivor_Insights_090519.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon/>

*Maya Mackey Dean is a passionate follower of Jesus serving with her husband, David, in the Central California Conference. She received her master's degree in community psychology, which allows her to use science and research to help people experience transformational change in their lives. She relishes quiet time with God and spending time with her little tribe: Shiloh, Norah, and Benjamin.*



SCAN FOR AUDIO

# Embracing CHANGE

## I THOUGHT I WAS READY FOR RETIREMENT . . .

RETIREMENT. AH, THAT MAGIC word. It's a goal almost everyone looks forward to and dreams about, right? No more alarm clocks. No more work challenges and schedules. Just endless days of nothing but leisure time, being your own boss, and enjoying life.

But wait! There are a few things about the process of retirement that the literature tends to gloss over, including relocating one's home base.

### MOVING

When we returned from mission service in 1994, we brought with us several suitcases, a trunk, and a kitchen stool. That was all. But after 20-some years of living and working in Maryland, we had accumulated a house full of stuff. Where did it all come from? Besides the work of preparing the house for sale, it also took many tedious hours of sorting through all our household goods—deciding what to keep, to sell, to give away.

Finally the house was sold and completely emptied out, and the big yellow moving van was loaded from front to back with what was left of our belongings. We said our final goodbyes to friends and neighbors, took one last look at the house, and then drove that van the three-day

trip across the United States from Maryland to our new address in Tri-Cities, Washington. We are now living just minutes from the homes of our two children and their families, and we are retired with nothing but free time ahead of us. It's the dream come true.

### FINDING NEW PURPOSE

We may have moved ourselves physically from one location to another, but for me there was still work to do in moving my mental and emotional response to this big change. My life up to this point was very much focused on my nursing job, my 25 music students, my church duties—all of which I loved. Suddenly, that all had stopped. I was experiencing homesickness and a keen sense of loss, some of the psychological effects that make moving one of the top-five most stressful events of life.

One Sabbath in our new church an announcement was made that immediately caught my attention. It was a call for volunteer help at our church-run Community Services food bank. That announcement brightened my day with its promise of possibilities—of a new and interesting service experience and a chance to make new friendships.

The Riverview Seventh-day Adventist Church, which we now attend in Pasco, Washington, is over 100 years old. For most of its earlier years the church's ministry services included a Dorcas Society providing clothing, bedding, household items, and grocery supplies in specific need situations. Over time Dorcas expanded to include an adoption agency for a short period of

## Embracing Change



*Connie and Stan Arlt received a special recognition plaque from the National Guard for valuable services to the community.*



*We have volunteers of all ages.*



*During COVID-19 the church parking lot turned into a distribution site.*



*Food supplies continue to arrive for distribution to families in need.*

time and to providing yearly Christmas and Thanksgiving gifts and food supplies to needy families in the community. All services were centered in a small building on the church property, the title of which was eventually changed from Dorcas to Community Services.

In the late 1980s Connie and Stan Arlt took over as co-managers of the Community Services program. Connie set up a well-organized and attractive thrift store with incoming donated used clothing and household items from church members and the community. A diaper bank service was also added.

Because of the urgent need for added space, the church bought a rundown house on the lot next to the church property. Stan efficiently saw to the complete renovation of the building, which then provided additional storage rooms and garage space for fridges and freezers to accommodate the ever-increasing supplies of incoming food shipments.

When my husband and I joined the volunteer staff in the fall of 2015, we found a well-run and enjoyable program. Trucked-in supplies arrived on Tuesday mornings. We then joined our new friends in sorting and stocking shelves, fridges, and freezers and in the preparation of staple and fresh produce boxes to be distributed the following day.

The most fun took place on Wednesday mornings when the Community Services was alive with clients from the community arriving to shop at the thrift store or to receive their quota of baby diapers and/or to check in and pick up boxes of food supplies. Helpers included volunteers not only from the church but also from the neighborhood and from groups of students attending our local church school. Up until 2019 client families receiving food each week numbered in the one hundreds.

### COVID DISRUPTION

As 2020 unfolded, paramount concerns arose over operational safety issues due to a rapidly spreading, potentially deadly

disease. In view of new restrictions and official mandates, would we continue to receive the weekly supply shipments? People still needed food—now more than ever—but could we continue providing services at this point?

After prayer and consultation together, management and staff got creative. Now no client needed to enter a building—all food and diaper distribution services took place outside in areas of the church's parking lot. The thrift store was discontinued. Masks, gloves, and vaccinations were mandated for all volunteers. All surfaces were routinely sanitized, and social distancing was respected.

To our complete surprise, instead of a decrease in the arrival of weekly food supplies, we were blessed with a huge increase, more than ever previously received. Added to that, Community Services was officially assigned 15 National Guard to assist as needed. These fine, energetic young adults stayed with us well into 2021. There was no question—God was blessing! During those precarious pandemic months, the number of clients served weekly increased into the two hundreds.

### AND NOW?

Although COVID restrictions and fears have decreased, weekly client visits continue to increase, with numbers now in the six hundreds.

When National Guard help finished, concern arose over how we were going to manage with just a few of us remaining volunteers. But help arrived unexpectedly from a variety of sources such as area churches, a local hospital, the community neighborhood, and a sister church in the Tri-Cities area. God has and is still truly blessing this ministry. Food supplies continue to arrive, and like the “loaves and fishes” of long ago, there is always enough for all who come in need—and with a little to spare.

### LESSONS LEARNED, BLESSINGS RECEIVED

1. We have lived here in Tri-Cities, Washington, now for seven years.



Volunteering at the food bank was the beginning of my embracing change. It opened doors to a host of new friendships—within our church, in our local church school, and among community folks. God has also graciously provided me with opportunities for home and hospital visits, as well as witnessing and friendship with special-need individuals and those severely ill whom I have met through the food bank ministry. Here are just a few examples:

- a. Becoming friends with an emaciated elderly man with many health problems and then delivering food to him when he became too sick to come to the food bank.
- b. Conducting weekly home food delivery and assistant visits to a sick elderly woman.
- c. Ministering to a gentleman suffering from liver failure who was a regular at the food bank until he passed away not too long ago. Before dying he gave his heart to the Lord. Although it was sad to lose this friend of the food bank staff, we were all blessed by seeing the peace God sent him in that decision.
- d. Befriending a 50-something-year-old troubled woman from a very turbulent childhood of

being rejected by her mother and then experiencing the loss of both her teenage children—her son to drowning and the shooting death of her daughter. She is a relatively new client but comes not only for food but also for encouragement, a hug, and often a prayer.

- e. Visiting with a tall, quiet gentleman who was raised an Adventist but left the faith in his adulthood and who was a regular at the food bank for many years. He often mentioned that one day he might come back to church. And he did attend our church several times until his tragic fall down a flight of stairs with significant injury to his head. Our prayer group prayed earnestly for him, and to the surprise of his surgeon he recovered and shocked us all by returning to the food bank one Wednesday morning several weeks later. He attended church once more before suddenly passing away in his home.
2. It takes time to adjust and appreciate the way a new church interacts and operates. Every church has its unique personality, and moving to a new church was challenging. However, the more I came to understand the culture and background of my new friends, the more I began to appreciate what I was experiencing in my new church.
  3. Family interaction is different when one lives near family versus periodically coming for visits from distances to enjoy a flurry of busy togetherness for short periods of time. Living near adult children and their families, although surely a blessing, involves fitting into their busy lives. Grandparents have the privilege of being available to help with childcare, to assist with food for overtired and hardworking adult children, and to be on call for any number of additional needs.

#### EMBRACE THE GOLD

Retirement is often referred to as “the golden years,” and for good reason. After we work hard for a lifetime, retirement can provide opportunity for choosing how time and energies will be spent. Possible activities can include travel, learning or experiencing new things, volunteering, spending time with family, getting involved in church activities and ministries as desired, or perhaps following a lifelong dream. Shared God-given talents, skills, and spiritual lessons learned over a lifetime can meaningfully encourage and bless family, church, and community—like refined gold—in the golden years of retirement. 7

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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.*



*The author and her husband have finally adjusted to retirement!*

*“The joy of retirement comes in those everyday pursuits that embrace the joy of life; to experience daily the freedom to invest one’s life-long knowledge for the betterment of others; and, to allocate time to pursuits that only received, in years of working, a fleeting moment.”*

*—Byron Pulsifer*





# OUR GOOD, Good Shepherd

## PSALM 23 EXPERIENCE

Work with your family to create a Psalm 23 (NKJV) experience.

- Verse 1: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." This verse means that God provides everything you need. Cut some sheep shapes from white paper. Praise God for all the things He does to be a good shepherd to you. Write each of these things on separate sheep shapes to make a whole flock of good things He does to care for you, as shepherds care for their sheep.
- Verse 2: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters."



Lay something green on the floor or find some soft grass to lie on. Take time to rest on the grass and feel peaceful. Sing a song together or blow bubbles and imagine you are blowing all your troubles to God and He is taking care of them. Give everyone a drink of cool water. Thank God for rest, Sabbaths, being refreshed, and good water to drink.

- Verse 3: "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Use a large ball of string to make a pathway to follow through and around your home.
- Verse 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Ask an adult to blindfold you so that everything is dark. Let them take you on a walk. See how safe you feel when someone who loves you guides you, even when you can't see where you are going. Find a long stick, like a staff. Pass it around your family and share stories of God's care, comfort, love, and leadership when you have gone through challenges and difficult times together.
- Verse 5: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over." Set a table for your family and make a simple feast of your favorite fruits and bread. Ask an adult to dip their finger in a drop of oil and draw a tiny heart of oil on your forehead to remind you that you are God's beloved son or daughter. Pour water into a beautiful glass placed in a dish. Pour the water until it overflows the glass. God's love for us is so generous! Share stories of God's generous blessings with each other.
- Verse 6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Make an earth-made-new home together out of whatever you have available. Or draw it on a sheet of paper. Draw each person in your family inside the house. Thank God for the wonderful gift of eternal life.



## 3D PSALM 23!

- Create a small model or scene for each verse of Psalm 23 using toys and other things you have around your home. Or go outside and make it out of natural things you can find on the beach, in the field or park, or in a forest, etc.
- Give each person in your family a different verse to illustrate. Or work together on one scene each day for a week or over six Sabbath afternoons or sunset worships. Or create a picture or collage to illustrate each verse, or even a short video if your family has the skills and equipment.
- How can you share your creations with your friends and family so they can experience the comforting and encouraging words of this psalm?

## SHEPHERDING GAME

- Gather some soft cotton balls (or make tiny balls by gently scrunching tissue paper into little balls) and some drinking straws (or use other thin tubes or even a pleated paper fan).
- Scatter the cotton balls (sheep) over a shiny floor or the top of a table. Use some masking tape to make the outline of a sheep fold on the floor or in the middle of the table.
- Work on your own, or as a small team, to blow or fan all the sheep into the sheepfold area.
- It's not an easy task! The "sheep" can be difficult to get into the fold! How are we like sheep? How does God guide us gently in the right direction?



## LOST SHEEP

- Choose your favorite Bible verse about sheep.
- Cut out enough paper sheep for you to write each word of the verse on a separate sheep.
- Ask an older person in your family to hide all the sheep in a room in your home or in the yard.
- Then see how quickly you can find all the sheep and put them in the right order to make the Bible verse. You can look for the sheep on your own or with a brother, sister, or friend.
- Once the sheep are arranged to make the verse, turn over one or two at a time and continue to repeat the verse until all the sheep are upside down and you can say the verse without any prompts!

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS YOU BY NAME

- Read John 10:1-5. God, our good, good shepherd, knows each of His children by name. He knows your name, your nickname, and many other things about you!
- Draw a sheep on a piece of strong paper or card stock and cut it out.
- Write your name on the front of the sheep.
- On the back of the sheep write a list of 10 amazing things God knows about you! What does He know that no one else knows? He knows everything about you, and He loves you so much! Nothing you can do can make Him love you more, or even make Him love you less! You are His precious sheep, and He cares for you!





## SHEPHERDS IN THE BIBLE

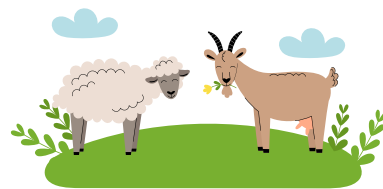
- Work with your family to list all the people in the Bible who were shepherds.
- See if you can find at least 10 named shepherds.
- Can you find 10 times in the Gospels where sheep or shepherds are mentioned?
- Now run around your home and find 10 sheep—toy sheep, pictures of sheep in books, and in any other places! Can't find 10? Invite everyone to make one or two sheep from things you have in your home. Gather them all together on a tray or in a basket.

## "LOST" SHEEP



- Cut some sheep shapes out of card stock.
- Make a list of people you are praying for, hoping they will choose to follow Jesus.
- Write each name on a different sheep shape and thread them on yarn or ribbon to make a garland as a reminder to pray for them.

## SHEEP AND GOATS




- In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) Jesus lists six kinds of things His followers, the sheep, might do for others.
- Read the parable and list what they do. Then make a list of ways you and your family could help people with a similar need in your community.

HOW "SHEEP" HELP OTHERS	HOW YOUR FAMILY CAN CARE FOR OTHERS IN A SIMILAR WAY

## A SHEPHERD FOR YOUR FAMILY

- Read Isaiah 40:11. This is a beautiful verse about the way Jesus cares for children and their parents. Talk together about what this verse means to you and your family.
- Then create something to illustrate God's loving care for all of you and write this verse somewhere on your creation.
- Put it in a place where the words will remind you of God's tender care.

## SHEEP FOR DINNER!

- Psalm 23:1 reminds us that everything we have comes from God and all our food is a gift from Him.
- Why not help to serve dinner one day? Arrange the food on each person's plate to look like a sheep, with a white fluffy body (rice, mashed potato, etc.), vegetable legs, eyes and ears, and green leafy vegetables to make a pasture under its feet.
- Thank God for all the ways He provides for your needs. 

**Karen Holford** lives in England. Isaiah 40:11 is one of her favorite verses. It helped her understand how much God cared for her and her little ones and that He was leading her gently and slowly while they were so small and dependent on her.

### *East-Central Africa Division*

This past March, Kenya Coast Field in East Kenya Union Conference held a graduation for ministerial spouses who took continuing education. The graduates now feel better equipped for ministry with their spouses and responded to the charge given them. Among this group there was one male ministerial spouse who completed the training. All the graduates were cheered on by pastors and PKs.



*Yusuf Ibrahim, male ministerial spouse, is an Adventist who converted from Islam and is married to Martha.*



*Ministerial spouses graduated from continuing education.*

In Southern Tanzania Union Mission, 21 ministerial spouses conducted public evangelism in one of the unentered areas in Tanganyika Field. Over two weeks they distributed 701 books and 6,000 tracts and visited homes for prayer and Bible studies. They also preached for one week, with 12 people being baptized and many more joining Bible study classes. They have assigned a lay evangelist who will continue with Bible studies and nurturing the newly baptized. They praise God for the great things He has done.



*Twelve people were baptized after an evangelism effort in Southern Tanzania.*



*Ministerial spouses conducted public evangelism in Southern Tanzania.*



*Northeast, South, and West Rwanda fields held a ministerial and spouses advisory.*



# TOO BUSY TO READ?

## WE GOT YOU.

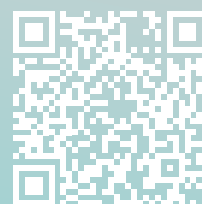
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