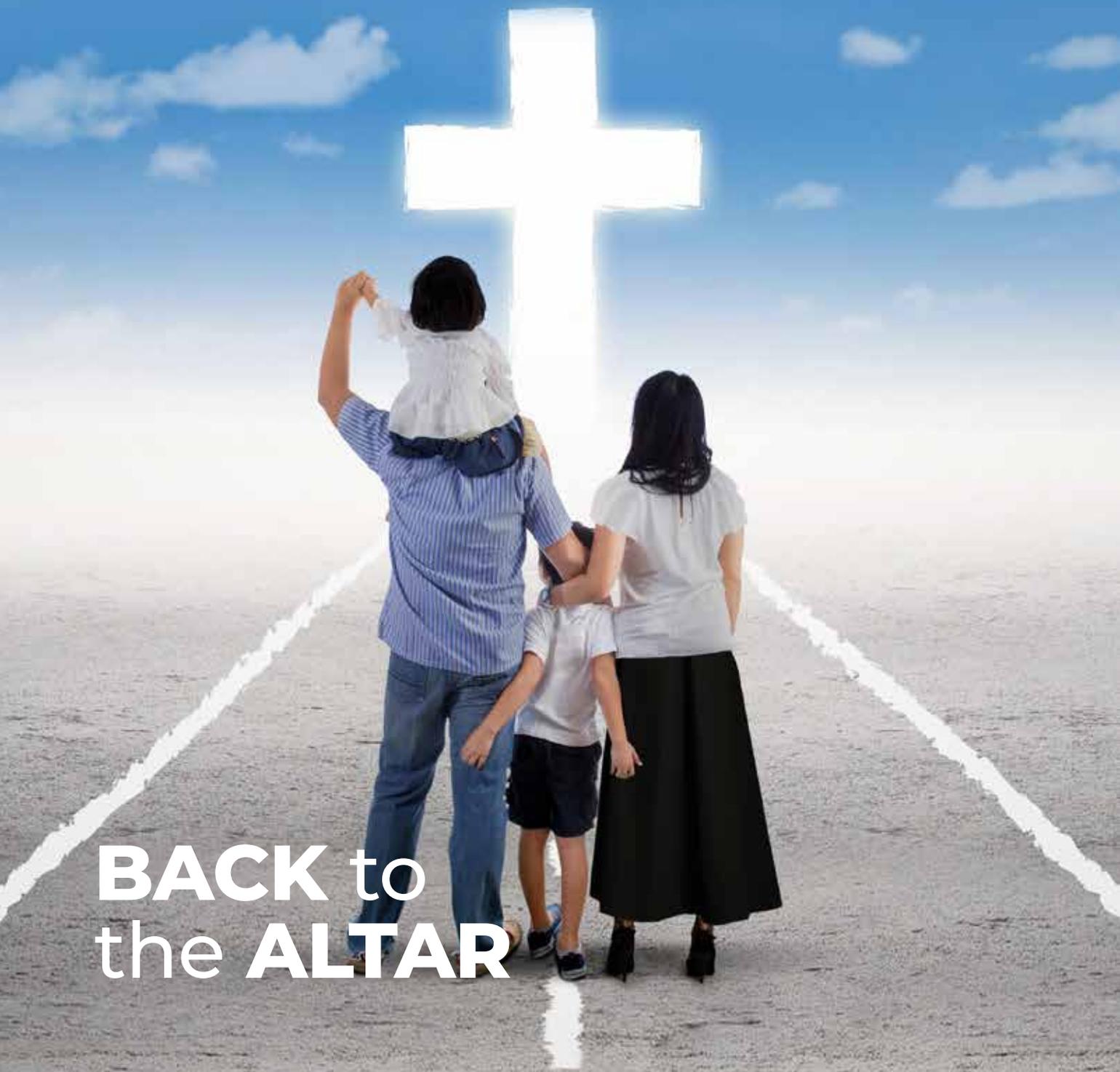


# STRONGER TOGETHER

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES | Vol. 40 | Issue One 2023



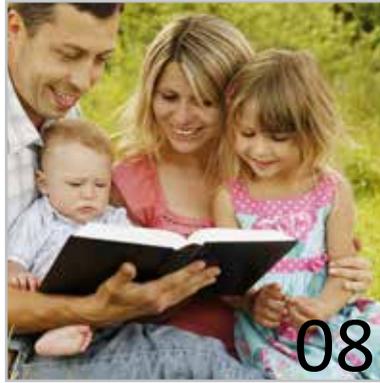
**BACK to  
the ALTAR**

# STRONGER TOGETHER

Vol. 40  
Issue One  
2023



SCAN TO READ ONLINE



## ON THE COVER

Ellen White wrote: "In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. . . . Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar" (*Child Guidance*, p. 520). The General Conference has launched the *Back to the Altar* initiative, with the goal that by 2027, at least 70 percent of Adventist members will be engaged in morning and evening personal and family worship.



## NEW NAME

Did you notice the magazine's new name? *The Journal* just didn't say enough about what we're doing together—and how we're stronger as we share our stories and struggles and ideas and prayers. You are not alone in your ministry, and that's what we want you to remember every time you read *Stronger Together*.



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# BACK TO THE Altar

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY CAN BE both a blessing and a curse. It can be a blessing when it helps us spend more time with God and our families. However, it can be a curse when it takes time that belongs to God and our families.

My husband and I sat in our favorite restaurant recently, waiting for our food to arrive. Next to us sat a young couple waiting for the server to come and take their order. We were talking and minding our business but could not help noticing that this young couple pulled out their digital devices and began to scroll through without saying a word to each other.

I thought, *Well, maybe when they get their food, they will talk to each other.* But that never happened. The food came, and they began to eat while staring at their devices. They sat there the whole time just glancing at their phones instead of enjoying each other's company.

## MORNING AND EVENING

How can we be sure technology is a blessing for our family instead of a curse? Are you concerned about the effects of today's digital technology on the minds of God's children? The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched a new initiative called *Back to the Altar*. It's a call to every member to restore personal and family worship. This initiative seeks to educate, inspire, and encourage members to strengthen their relationship with God by spending more time in prayer and Bible study and less time on

digital devices. It prioritizes allowing the Holy Spirit to talk to us through the Word of God and encourages healthy ways to use media. I'm excited about this initiative because I believe it will help transform our lives into the image of Jesus.

*Back to the Altar* reminds us that the people of God in the Old Testament erected altars to worship God. God instructed His people, "One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight" (Exodus 29:39). Likewise, every Christian home should worship God in the morning and evening. Prayer and the study of the Bible should not be neglected if we want to maintain a close relationship with God and grow spiritually. Ellen G. White says: "If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Infidelity and skepticism prevail. Iniquity abounds. Corruption flows in the vital currents of the soul, and rebellion against God breaks out in the life. Enslaved by sin, the moral powers are under the tyranny of Satan. The soul is made the sport of his temptations; and unless some mighty arm is stretched out to rescue him, man goes where the archrebel leads the way" (*Child Guidance*, p. 517).

Digital technology has positive benefits. I enjoy listening to the Bible and other Christian literature on my phone. I read my Sabbath School lesson on my phone. When my son Gabriel was 3 years old, I bought him the book *First Steps*, which was also narrated on an audio cassette. He listened to that tape every single day and was able to memorize the whole book, even the *ding* sound to change the page. My husband memorized entire books of the Bible just listening on his phone. So technology can be a blessing. But we need to ask God to help us use it wisely. Would you like to commit yourself with me to spend time worshiping God early in the morning and evening? Would you like to say to Jesus, "I want my house to be a house of prayer for the Lord"?

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*Aurora Canals serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses and families.*

*Every Christian home should worship God in the morning and evening.*





# Special Quotes

Every family should rear its altar of prayer, realizing that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If any persons in the world need the strength and encouragement that religion gives, it is those who are responsible for the education and training of children. They cannot do their work in a manner acceptable to God while their daily example teaches those who look to them for guidance that they can live without God. If they educate their children to live for this life only, they will make no preparation for eternity. They will die as they have lived, without God, and parents will be called to account for the loss of their souls. Fathers, mothers, you need to seek God morning and evening at the family altar, that you may learn how to teach your children wisely, tenderly, lovingly.

—*Child Guidance*, p. 517

Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among men, was often in prayer. Our Saviour identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, “in all points tempted like as we are;” but as the sinless one His nature recoiled from evil; He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Saviour of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer.

—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 93, 94

If the mind is set to the task of studying the Bible, the understanding will strengthen and the reasoning faculties will improve. Under the study of the Scriptures the mind expands and becomes more evenly balanced than if occupied in obtaining information from books that have no connection with the Bible.

—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 452

Family worship should not be governed by circumstances. You are not to pray occasionally, and when you have a large day’s work, neglect it. In thus doing you lead your children to look upon prayer as of no special consequence. Prayer means very much to the children of God, and thank offerings should come up before God morning and evening. Says the Psalmist, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”

—*Manuscript 12*, 1898

It was in hours of solitary prayer that Jesus in His earth life received wisdom and power. Let the youth follow His example in finding at dawn and twilight a quiet season for communion with their Father in heaven. And throughout the day let them lift up their hearts to God. At every step of our way He says, “I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, . . . Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

—*Education*, p. 259



# PERSONAL EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

**WE NEED TO EXPERIENCE JESUS FOR OURSELVES.**

I WAS A TEENAGE TERROR. I drove my mother crazy and can still hear her saying to me as she pulled out her hair in desperation, “Just wait till you have your own kids; then you’ll understand what I’m going through!”

The time came when I not only understood her words but repeated them regularly to my own son during his exasperating teenage years. There’s something inexplicable about being a parent that can be understood only by personal experience.

Like being a parent, Christianity must be personally experienced. Otherwise, we will give our allegiance to people instead of our personal Savior. The experience of the Samaritans in John 4:39-42 is an inspiring confirmation of this fact.

In this familiar passage, commonly known as the story of the woman at the well, a nameless woman from Sychar, the red-light district of Samaria, had a personal encounter with Jesus. It changed her life forever. So dramatic was the transformation that she left her water jar to tell everyone she met along the way about “a man” whose name she didn’t even know at the time, but who told her everything about herself.

Several Samaritans in the town believed her testimony and sought out Jesus to see and hear Him for themselves. And when they did, they too were changed. So, like the woman, they went back home and told others. This resulted in the conversion of “many more.” After they all met and spent time with Jesus, they made this fascinating statement: “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (verse 42, NIV).

The Samaritans listened and responded to the woman’s testimony, but soon they were not satisfied with just a secondhand knowledge of Jesus. They wanted to meet and experience Him for themselves, so they sought and found Jesus. Their faith was now based on personal experience with “the Savior of the world.”

# They were not satisfied with just a secondhand knowledge of Jesus.

## THE HEART

If a personal experience with Christ is at the very heart of the Christian faith, on whom or what is your faith anchored? In the words of a favorite hymn: “Will your anchor hold in the storm of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift, or firm remain?”\*

Our anchor can and will hold only if, like the Samaritans, our faith is built on nothing less than a personal knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ’s righteousness.

Christianity, as you know, is more than just a statement of faith, more than church membership, more than faith in the words of a preacher, even if it’s evident that one has been changed, healed, freed, and delivered by Jesus. It is a faith based on personal experience with the Savior so that going to church isn’t about who’s preaching but about being in the presence of the Savior of the world, to worship Him in spirit and truth.

The apostle Paul, one of the great Christians of all time, wrote on more than one occasion about his own impeccable heritage and history. But he said he counted all of those things as “loss” compared to his personal faith experience with Jesus (Philippians 3:7, 8).

The Christian experience often begins with hearing the message, but it doesn’t stop there. One must believe the message and come to Jesus for oneself. Peter said, “For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of

our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16, NIV). Secondhand experience was not good enough for Peter, Paul, or the Samaritans—and neither is it good enough for us.

Upon meeting Jesus, the Samaritans quickly switched their affection and allegiance from the woman to Jesus and said, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” They didn’t just think or feel as if He *might* be the Savior. They knew because they experienced Him personally. Only this knowledge can sustain us through the ups and downs of life. 7

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\* *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), no. 534.

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*Hyveth Williams is a professor of homiletics at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. This article appeared on Adventist Review online, January 14, 2015.*

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SCAN FOR AUDIO



# FAMILIES INFUSED WITH FAITH

SEE HOW ONE COUPLE BROUGHT THEIR FAMILY  
“BACK TO THE ALTAR.”

SARAH AND MARK TOOK THEIR children to church, studied the Sabbath School lessons, and had family worship together as often as they could. Yet they felt that something was missing from the spiritual experience of their family. They went back to the Bible and reread Deuteronomy 6. After praying through these verses, they decided to do exactly what the passage said. They would infuse their lives with faith and make God’s love real and known through their everyday life, including when waking, walking, eating, and going to sleep.

## MAKE A FAITH PLAN

First, they made a faith plan for their family. They wrote down everything they wanted their children to learn about God. “We decided that God’s loving, generous, and graceful character needed to be at the heart of our family and infuse everything we do. The more we explored God’s loving character together, the more excited we were about sharing God with our children in wonderful and creative ways,” explains Sarah.

Mark adds, “We realized that we loved each other because He first loved us. So we let God’s love soak into our own lives and hearts and then flow through us to our children so they would fall in love with Him too.”

## *We make the most of teachable moments and spontaneous spiritual opportunities.*

Sarah and Mark decided to study a different aspect of God's loving character every month of the year for family worship. They took a big whiteboard, divided it into 12 sections, and wrote a different characteristic in each square. Then they added other ideas and Bible verses to the board. They purchased a file with 12 sections where they could drop additional ideas, worksheets, and craft supplies to help them plan creative worships together.

"We made this our shared couple project," says Sarah. "We sat down for an hour a week to plan fun and interactive worships for the children. We also wrote a list of good questions we could discuss together as a family on busy days, at bedtimes, in the car, or during dinner." (See the sidebar for examples.)

### **IDENTIFY CORE VALUES**

Sarah and Mark decided what they wanted their children to learn about faith, prayer, and the Christian life. They chose their core values as a family and the character strengths they hoped to nurture in their children. They wanted their children to experience delightful Sabbaths and be joyfully and creatively involved in their local church as well as a caring outreach project.

They used these core values when writing their plan for infusing their family with faith. What would they do to make Sabbaths delightful? What traditions would they start, and what resources might they need? How could they make church a joy for their children? How would they notice and nurture their children's character strengths? How would they creatively help their children develop good values? What kind of caring projects would work best for their children and family with their unique skills, resources, and passions?

### **FAMILY FAITH DISCUSSION STARTERS**

TRY THESE AT MEALTIMES, BEDTIMES, TRAVEL TIMES, AND ANYTIME.

- What was one of the happiest moments of your day? Let's celebrate that joy together!
- What was one of the saddest moments of your day? We want to listen to your story so we can comfort you. (Romans 12:15)
- When did you feel most afraid today? How can we help you feel less afraid? (1 John 4:18)
- What did you see in God's creation that filled you with wonder today?
- What can I pray about for you today?
- What's the most helpful thing I can do for you today?
- What three things did you do well today, with God's help? Let's celebrate those moments!
- Which character strengths did you practice today? (Find a list here: <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>.)
- These are three things I saw you doing well today. (List them.) I was filled with joy!
- You made a good choice today when . . .
- Where did you see God at work today? How did you join Him in His work?
- When did you experience God's love today? What effect did that have on you?
- What did you learn about God's love today? Let's praise Him for His love!
- How did you share God's love with others today? What happened when you did?

### PRAY TOGETHER

“We want our children to pray simply and freely to God, as if they’re chatting to their daddy, as Jesus did,” explains Sarah. “We stop wherever we are and just tell God how His beautiful sky fills us with wonder, or tell Him about a disappointment, or ask for help with a math problem. We want them to learn that God cares all about their lives and loves their curious questions about the world.”

“We even pray prayers that might not be answered, as we hope to help them understand that our prayers may receive unexpected answers,” says Mark. “It doesn’t mean that God isn’t hearing, or that God doesn’t care, or that we need to pray harder. God is just working things out in ways we cannot understand and see right now—but He will make everything beautiful eventually. We don’t want them to think that God is like a Father Christmas, who will answer all our prayers if we’re good.”

### STAY SPONTANEOUS

“We’ve learned the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit and making the most of teachable moments and spontaneous spiritual opportunities,” Sarah and Mark state. “When the children were playing with a remote-controlled toy, we used it to illustrate how the Holy Spirit works in ways we cannot see. Last week a lady fell outside our home. We picked up her shopping and stayed with her until the ambulance came. So the children learned more about kindness and compassion. Our youngest asked if he could pray for her, and the lady was so touched, she cried. That evening we explored the story of the good Samaritan.”

### BE TRANSFORMATIVE

“Infusing our whole life with faith has transformed our family,” shares Mark. “Putting God’s love into action changes how we discipline our children with love, how we show forgiveness to each other, and where we see God at work in each other’s lives. We are also more transparent about our own faith journeys with our children. We tell our children what God is teaching us, how we listen for His voice each day, and how we experience His continual and loving presence in our lives.”

Sarah agrees. “We are seeing many more opportunities to share our faith with our children, in real and practical ways, than when we just focused on worship times, Sabbath School lessons, and getting them to church. And our faith, as adults, has developed in directions we could never imagine! Infusing our family with faith, wherever and whenever we can, has been hard work, but also very rewarding. We’re all on a journey into the very heart of God’s loving character, and I think it’s an adventure that will last forever!”

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*Karen Holford writes from England, where she is also on an amazing and eternal adventure of discovering God’s love.*



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## WHAT I LEARNED WORKING AT A GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

ONE MOMENT I WAS drowsily sitting at my station on the floor of the first General Conference business session, and the next I was swarmed by delegates wishing to speak. I frantically sorted through badges and scanned QR codes while directing delegates to the microphone. As the debate continued, delegates began raising motions: motions to vote immediately, motions to refer back to committee, and even motions to second other motions. Each motion meant a new queue of speakers was started, meaning I had a new set of badges to scan. Soon I was left with only one question: *What on earth is going on?*

In June 2022 I was one of the nine Kettering Health summer interns and employees who went to St. Louis, Missouri, to help at the 61st General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I was assigned the role of main floor barcode attendant page, a fancy name for a simple job. I was given a station on the floor of the Dome at the America's Center, a laptop, and a scanner. My role was to scan QR codes on the badges of delegates who wished to speak. They would then be entered into a digital queue, ready for the chair of the meeting to call on them. With eight separate stations on the floor, this seemed like quite a boring task. After all, nobody pays attention to the little details. Right?

I was unprepared for the amount of passion the delegates brought to their roles. They questioned everything, even comma placements! I quickly realized there is a lot more to church business than I had thought. Having grown up a Seventh-day Adventist, I was familiar with the structure of the local church, but I hadn't given any thought to how the conferences and unions fit together. Watching the delegates debate motions that would affect every church in the world was fascinating.

### ONE GOAL

As the week progressed, I became better at keeping track of the motions on the floor. I developed a rhythm for scanning badges that allowed me to keep up with the waves of delegates who came my way. I was able to understand why the parliamentary procedure was so important in keeping debate organized. The delegates spent hours discussing different perspectives; without some sort of structure in place, we would have never been through. Sometimes the arguments for or against a certain issue got a bit heated. I always pricked up my ears to hear what the delegates had to say.

The last few years have been marked by instability across the world. No one has escaped untouched, not even our church. Many of the reports that we heard focused on how the church has been adapting to new circumstances across the globe. It was comforting to hear that despite the changes, our church's core mission and focus on Christ remain the same. Although the delegates often disputed the details of the motions, it was easy to tell they had the same goal in mind: to spread the message of Christ's soon return. **7**

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*Annika Cambigue is a junior communication and English major at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. She says, "Even though my General Conference experience got off to a rocky start, I am still glad I got the chance to go!"*



SCAN FOR AUDIO



# ONE VERSE

IT'S AS EASY AS THAT TO BEGIN A MEANINGFUL JOURNEY WITH JESUS.

*“You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”*

*Jeremiah 29:13*

A FEW MONTHS INTO my freshman year in college, I realized I was not ready for Christ to come. I was raised Adventist, had gone to Adventist schools, attended Bible camps, and even worked at summer camp for a season. I *knew* about the Second Coming. I had heard sermons on it my whole life, but in spite of all that, I was afraid for Christ to come. *I wasn't ready.* And I didn't really know how to get ready.

So my roommate and I committed to sharing just one Bible verse with each other before bedtime every night. In the mornings I would read a passage on my own—nothing long, just another Bible verse. Sure, it would take some time to get familiar with the whole Bible, but at least it was a start.

Midway through my sophomore year, I went to Seoul, Korea, as a conversational English teacher. I had done pretty well sticking to my one-passage-a-day commitment in

the morning. So now I often added a short story or devotion from the book *My Daily Bread* to go with it. I realized there was so much more to the Bible that I didn't know, and I really began to *enjoy* reading it! I found new gems all the time.

During my year in Korea I also started reading a book by Ellen White I had brought with me called *Messages to Young People*. It had a bright-pink cover. The short, broken-up sections made it easy to read and perfect to add to my morning worship. I found that the more I read, the more I liked it and the more I wanted to read.

As I read the Bible and my first Ellen White book, I began to realize my own sinfulness and need for a Savior. I saw my shortcomings and *longed* to be more like Jesus. I began understanding Bible passages that were just mere words only years before. God was speaking to *me* through His Word!



# *The Scriptures come alive and address our unique circumstances.*

## **HIS GIFT**

One day on the drive to class, a passage that had been floating around in my head clicked: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). *I get it*, I thought to myself. It’s not about what *I* do—being a good Christian—but rather what *Christ* has done for me—died for my sins. And my salvation comes not through going to church or being good but rather by trusting in Him.

This realization changed my life and understanding of being saved. It gave me the peace of mind I was searching for. My quest to be ready for Jesus’ return resulted in not only a better understanding of the Bible but also in a relationship with Christ that continues to this day. Accepting Christ’s sacrifice is what saves me. And you too! If being an Adventist feels like you’re just acting in a play, may I suggest you spend more time seeking God? Start by committing to spend time with Him each day. Find a quiet place where you won’t be interrupted. Put aside any distractions. Then try the following ideas.

**1. Pray.** Ask God to give you a desire for Bible study and prayer. Ask Him to give you a clear mind and to reveal anything that would separate you from knowing Him better. Ask for Christ’s presence in your life and for a revelation of His character. Pray for a desire to study and know His Word and for the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you.

**2. Read the Bible,** even if it’s only one verse a day! Unlike other books, the Bible is God’s Word. It’s *living* and *active*, and when we ask for the Holy Spirit to speak to us, the Scriptures seem to come alive and address our unique circumstances. The more you read, the more you’ll be drawn into it.

**3. Claim promises.** Take God at His Word and repeat His Word back to Him. Here are some meaningful passages to get you started:

- “Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.” Psalm 25:5
- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5, 6
- “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” Romans 12:1, NIV
- “Those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.” Psalm 9:10
- “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” Psalm 46:10
- “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7
- “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7, NIV

**4. Read the Spirit of Prophecy.** If you’ve never read any of Ellen White’s books, start with something small like *Steps to Christ*. As you progress, add other Spirit of Prophecy books to complement your Bible study and prayer. As you read, your heart and mind will be lifted heavenward.

Jeremiah 29:13 is not just a Bible promise, it’s a *reality*. If you seek God with all your heart, your mind, and your soul, you will find Him. And you’ll be thankful you did. ■

---

*Jackie Ordelleide Smith is the communication and processing coordinator for the North American Division Office of Volunteer Ministries.*



# “Ouch! That Hurt!”

## WHY DO WE EXPERIENCE PAIN?

HE WAS JUST A LITTLE CHILD, perhaps 5 or 6 years old, walking beside his mother in the grocery store. When he stopped to watch someone pass by, she accidentally bumped into him with her shopping cart, catching the side of his head. He looked up at her in surprise, with his hand on the injured site. It had been a slight bump, so no tears were involved. A sympathetic hug from Mom with words of sympathy seemed to soothe any painful discomfort.

### WHY PAIN?

Our bodies are wired with specialized nerves called nociceptors, which have the ability to detect damage to tissue and instantly relay the information via the spinal cord to the brain. If you touch a hot stove, before you have a moment to even think about

what you should do, you experience an instant, automatic contraction of the muscles and your hand jerks away in response, thus limiting further damage. The muscle contraction response occurs spontaneously, even before the message reaches the brain, which then alerts us to the unpleasant sensation of pain.

Some people have disruption to the signal system caused by nerve injury or disease. Because she is a diabetic with decreased sensation of feeling to her feet, Ella<sup>1</sup> was unable to tell how badly she was being burned as she walked barefoot on the hot cement around the swimming pool. Only when her feet started to bleed was it brought to her attention that something was terribly wrong. The severe burns to the soles of her



## *We begin recognizing early in life what can cause us pain and how to avoid it.*

feet required aggressive medical intervention to keep infection from occurring during the slow healing process.

As prevalent and undesirable as pain is in life on this earth, it can also be a blessing. Our body's ability to feel pain can be seen as most helpful in our pursuit of good health. Whether being bumped by a shopping cart, stubbing our toe on a sharp rock, being stung by a bee, closing the door on a finger, feeling the throbbing of an infected tooth, or experiencing discomfort from any internal area of the body due to injury or disease, pain is the 911 call from the brain that there is a problem that needs attention. Ignore that call, and there's a chance of further complications that can affect health, functioning ability, quality of life, and perhaps even longevity. We begin recognizing early in life what can cause us pain and how to avoid that from happening.

There are situations in which pain ceases playing a protective role and becomes chronic, a disease in itself, as in cases such as rheumatoid arthritis or migraine headaches.

### **THE BRAIN AND HEART**

Our brain, besides identifying and orchestrating our physical response to environmental stimuli, also takes in and records everything that touches us in life—the things we study and learn, our interaction and relationships with others, and various experiences bad or good—all of which have the ability to generate an emotional response. In songs, poetry,

and Scripture the heart is often referred to as the center of our emotions. We have the ability to feel joy, sadness, excitement, love, and, yes, pain too. Emotional pain, or heartfelt pain, is a psychological response from nonphysical sources, which can include:

1. Hurtful words and rejection
2. Grief and sadness
3. Remorse and guilt
4. Anxiety and fear
5. Discontent and anger

We tend to downplay emotional pain, giving it less regard than physical pain. However, prolonged emotional pain can have a detrimental effect on both physical and mental health. Functional body responses (which may have no identifiable physical cause) to unresolved emotional pain could include headaches, muscle pains, upset stomach and intestinal problems, tiredness, sadness, depression, withdrawal, changes in personality, and decreased interest in activities of daily living.



*“The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes.”*

*The Ministry of Healing, p. 241*

As a happy young man and good student, John had one goal: become a Marine. In the Marines he thrived and excelled, finishing at the top of every class, including flight school, where he became a Cobra attack helicopter pilot. John experienced several traumatic events in his career, including the loss of eight close friends in training accidents, a vehicle collision in which the other driver was killed, and his deployment to Iraq, where he flew 75 combat missions in just a few months. He arrived home from that assignment tired, thin, easily irritated, anxious, and impatient, with no interest in the company of family and friends. Despite his wife’s urgings to seek professional help, within a few weeks John had ended his life by suicide. His unresolved buildup of grief drove his focus to ending his terrible emotional pain. More attention needs to be given to maintenance of good mental health, especially in professions that almost require emotional distancing from experiences of trauma, suffering, and death of others.

#### THE GOOD NEWS

There will be an ultimate and forever end to all pain. A most happy day is coming, and it’s coming soon, when there will be no more pain and tears. There will be no more *need* of pain, either physical or emotional, as warning and protector. In heaven we won’t find sharp stones that hurt our toes, bees that sting, teeth that ache, hurtful words, death of friends and loved ones, sickness or accidents or trauma or harm. All will be peace,

loveliness, and endless joy, for God, who will then live with us, has promised His faithful children: “He will wipe away all their tears, and there will be no more death, or sadness, or crying or *pain*” (Revelation 21:4, emphasis supplied).<sup>2</sup> “There will be no harm or hurt in all of God’s kingdom” (Isaiah 11:9).

I’m so longing for that wonderful day. Aren’t you? For now, know most assuredly that He loves and cares for you during your life’s journey in this sin-infested, potentially dangerous, and often pain-causing world. His promises are for real, and they are for you. **J**

<sup>1</sup> Name has been changed.

<sup>2</sup> Bible passages are from *The Clear Word*.

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# TIPS TO

# THRIVE



SCAN FOR AUDIO

## FUN FAMILY WORSHIP

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I heard someone say, “Ready, set, SHOOT!”

*How clever is that!* I thought. I’d always heard, “Ready, set, go.” I wanted to use my clever new saying with my family, but I could never think of a way to use it just in passing.

Then during worship one evening I said, “Let’s all say the Lord’s Prayer together after our worship prayer. I’ll tell us when to start.” At the right time I said, “Ready, set, SHOOT!” I expected some kind of reprimand, but my parents must have understood my childish indiscretion and let it go.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 tells us to prepare our hearts since we really can’t share with our children what is not in our own hearts. Verse 7 says to teach God’s words “diligently.” Our planning and interaction must be diligent. The same verse tells us when to do the teaching: when you “sit in your house” and when you “walk by the way.” This could be translated “in the house and in the car.” Both of these times can be great for sharing spiritual wisdom to help children keep up their relationship with Jesus through the day. Pray for them, and with them, that God will protect them from harm and also from evil.

You’ve probably heard of the little game “I Spy.” We used that with our children, calling it “I Spied God.” In family worship at the end of the day, we all tried to

remember times when we “saw” God working for us. This not only gave us occasion to thank God but also helped us remember to watch for Him all day long.

Verse 7 also says, “when you lie down, and when you rise up.” To me this indicates morning and evening family worships. Indeed, these take time, and we seem to have so little to spare. But can we think of anything better to do with our time than to lead our children to Jesus?

Morning worships need to be quite short because the family is hurrying to leave the house. A page out of an interesting devotional book could be read together followed by a short prayer. Be sure to pray for each child by name. Our children need to hear us praying for them. That might be what will protect them from indulging in any wrong act when it presents itself. They can remember Mom or Dad praying for them.

Try to make evening worships memorable. Plan interesting content that will interest the children and ask God to guide as you plan. Consider your children’s likes and make spiritual applications of them in worship. Have the children help make the plans and carry them out in worships. This is a time when “I spied God” can be shared with the family. **7**

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

*Our children need to hear us praying for them.*



# OFF THE TRAIL

WHAT SKIING TAUGHT ME ABOUT GOD.

SCAN FOR AUDIO



AFTER SCHEDULING A SKI VACATION to Mt. Hood in Oregon, I heard that three hikers were lost on the mountain. My family watched for live news updates and prayed they would be safe. The search unfolded over the next week, but by the time we got on the airplane, the report was grim. My family and I vowed to stay in the skiing area and avoid obvious danger.

From the plane window I counted five mountaintops rising taller than the clouds. I couldn't wait to ski "above the clouds." When we got to our resort at the base of the mountains, we saw no snow. So we went for forest walks and golfed without coats, hoping we'd find snow on the ski trails. Thankfully, as we drove up the mountain to the ski lodge one day, snow started to appear. By the time we got there the snow was higher than our car.

I carried my snow gear to the first of three ski lifts, as it was too warm to wear it all. By the second lift I'd zipped up my coat, and by the third lift I'd put on all my winter gear and was thankful for every bit of it. I couldn't believe

the difference in the weather between the base of the mountain and where I now stood only partway to the top. I enjoyed looking out to the other mountains peeking above the clouds.

Then I started skiing down in what I thought was the right direction. After I'd descended into the cloud, though, visibility was severely diminished, further hampered by the snowfall. Things went OK until I fell right into the deep ruts of the enormous snow-grooming machine, nowhere near the trail. That rut was so deep I had to take off my skies and throw them over my head before I could claw my way up and out. Putting my skies back on, I tried skiing to the right, finding the trail farther over. Out of cloud cover now, I started enjoying normal skiing again.

Not wanting to go all the way down to warm weather, I decided to take the second lift. While waiting, I noticed a sign that read: "WARNING: Stay only on the ski trails. You or your heirs will have to pay the expensive costs of your rescue or recovery if you ski off-trail."

## “WARNING: Stay only on the ski trails.”

That was a cryptic sign, I thought, wondering what harrowing stories required its placement.

After skiing awhile more, I stopped to rest by the trail’s edge. That’s when I spotted a snow-covered off-trail path picturesquely winding through a pine grove. *Oh, it looks so inviting*, I thought. I hesitated, thinking of the rut I’d already fallen in, the lost hikers, and the sign.

My grandfather once told me if you have to stop to think whether it’s right or wrong, it’s wrong. Whenever I haven’t followed this advice, I’ve been sorry. But in the end the allure of the beautiful mountain scenery and the irresistible, harmless-looking meandering path won me over. *It looks safe, and I’m sure everything will be OK*, I rationalized. So I went for it.

### MISTAKE

Skiing was easy at the start, and I had the most fun I’d had all day. I was screaming with laughter, which is a rare event. I expected to intersect a groomed ski trail farther down the mountain and felt fully confident I could do this without mishap. The beautiful scenery and the quietness of the off-trail mountain seclusion were captivating. *It doesn’t get any better than this*, I thought.

I was skiing very fast because the hill was steep. Ski carving around obstacles was fun and made it more interesting. At first the obstacles were few and far between, but before long the terrain changed. As the obstacles became larger and more frequent, I started having to make way too many decisions

way too fast for my comfort zone. *Should I go left or right? Through the trees or around them? Over the hump or around it?* This had crossed the line from fun to concern.

Going too fast to avoid a V-shaped tree, I barely got my long skis together in time to fit through the small space, almost injuring my leg. Forced to ski beyond the top of my ability, I found my concern turn to fear as another tree loomed ahead. I barely ducked in time to miss a branch and a painful head injury. I kept up my intense skiing, realizing I couldn’t let up for a second. I was getting very tired.

I was in serious danger from what looked so innocuous at the beginning. Remembering that cryptic warning sign made me even more uncomfortable. I feared I was not up for this excursion after all. I tried to slow down, but the steep grade scoffed at all my efforts. I remembered the promise of Psalm 48:1: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” I was in trouble, but I never doubted that God would answer my prayers for help. “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

It was frightening to think that I had told no one where I was going. There was no one nearby to hear my cry for help, and no one was going to just happen by and notice me. This was entirely my fault.



*I tried to slow down, but the steep grade scoffed at all my efforts.*

As humans we're far too good at ignoring warning signs for our safety. We rationalize, *Oh, it will be all right just this once. It seems safe enough.* God gives us a guardrail of love for our safety and happiness, and He wants only what's best for us, so He warns us of the dangers we must avoid in order to live our best lives. I was sure I wouldn't be a *recovery* from this forbidden fun, but I did wonder if I was going to become a *rescue* because of a potential broken bone or concussion.

**SAFE!**

Though the scenery was unparalleled for beauty, I barely noticed it as I narrowly avoided serious injury three more times. Relief flooded over me when I—now exhausted and breathless—slid out onto the lower trail. Stopping to catch my breath and recuperate, I thanked God that I was finally safe, and I promised myself I would never do anything so reckless or stupid again.

So why did I make such a big error in judgment? I had all the evidence I needed: three lost hikers, my own fall into the deep rut, and a written warning that should have prompted me to make the correct and safe decision.

We have four tools God provides for our decision-making. First, the Ten Commandments. If something violates one of these, it's a no-brainer. Second, God's Word that warns us "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). He's kind enough not to let us dodge off to live our lives without an instruction manual to guide us. Third, biblical examples give us warnings, such

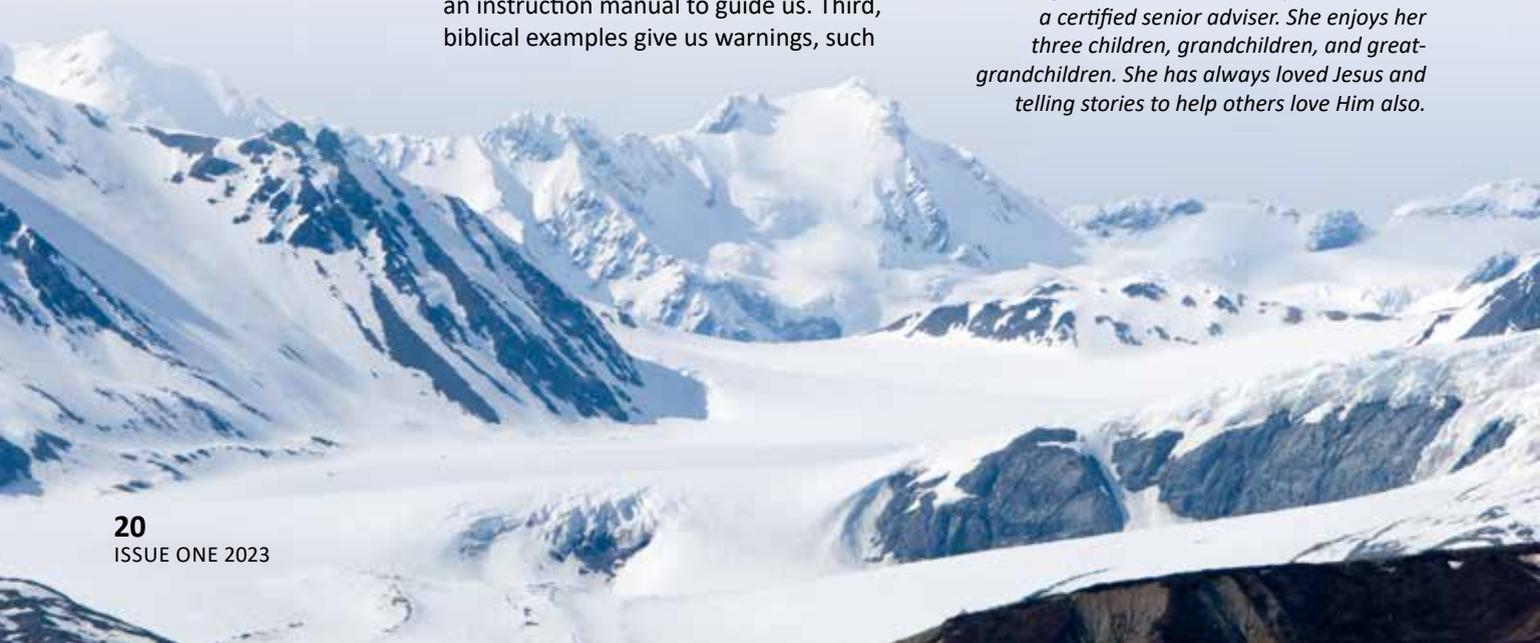
as the stories of Samson, King Saul, and King David in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the stories of Judas and Ananias and Sapphira show us the end from the beginning. Fourth, good advice from godly mentors. Whenever I heeded my grandfather's advice, I wasn't sorry.

Still, we often make the unsafe, unwise, and sorrow-inducing decisions that cause us so much pain. Life is often harsh, and we have to live with the results of our sin. Yet God always answers our prayers for rescue, even though we often end up paying some consequences. Our loving God is merciful. His Word is clear that sin is to be avoided, but His promises are as sure as His love, and His love for us is greater than we can imagine.

We are reassured by the promise in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Jesus encourages us in His promise in John 14:16: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." He promises His Holy Spirit to help in our weakness. Remember that God sees you, hears you, and loves you always. **7**

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# “GET OFF THE COUCH!”

SOMETIMES HONORING GOD MEANS LEAVING OUR COMFORT ZONE.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

ABOUT A DECADE AGO my young son and I sat in Katarina’s kitchen with some other invited moms and their children. As we munched on Katarina’s carob-chip cookies, she suddenly clapped her hands. “Let me have your attention,” she said in her German accent. “We will now have worship in the family room.”

Her toddler son, Fritz, scowled. “When can we play?”

“Worship comes first.” Katarina led us to the family room and read a devotional. She then invited us to kneel for prayer.

Everyone complied . . . except Fritz.

Katarina squinted at him. “Get down on your knees, Fritz.”

“I don’t want to.” He delivered his verdict in a sing-song voice.

“We are kneeling to talk to Jesus. Get on the floor.”

“I want to stay here.” The young dissenter pushed farther into the back of the couch.

“Fritz!”

“I’m comperbull.” He hugged a pillow. “It’s soft.”

“Comfortable? Soft?” The pitch of Katarina’s voice rose with each word. “Jesus hung on the cross for you! And you can’t even kneel for Him?”

This was one of those moments when I, while kneeling with my eyes half closed, tried to give the impression that I wasn’t listening. But I not only heard every word of their exchange; I couldn’t forget it.

“Jesus hung on the cross for you! And you can’t even . . .”

## REALIZATIONS

As those words echoed in my mind over the next months (and still do), I completed the sentence in personal ways:

You can’t even . . .

get up 30 minutes earlier to have devotional time with God.

dig into your vacation fund to help a refugee family.

volunteer your afternoon to move someone’s heavy books.

give up social media every seven days to focus on spiritual thoughts.

As I rehearsed the sentence for myself, I realized that the “can’t” really needed to be “won’t.”

“You won’t even . . .” These were daily choices I was making—choices to stay on the cushy couch when God might be calling me to more spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, temperance, stewardship, and service.

And then I thought about the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). Three gospels record his brief interaction with Jesus, and all three have basically the same details, including the challenge Jesus gave him: “sell your possessions, give to the poor, and follow Me.”

Jesus was telling this young man, “I have so much more to offer you in this life—and the next—if you will only trust Me. If you will give up what you cling to—your time, your resources, your attention.”

He is actually a well-known Bible character because of this galvanizing exchange, but I can’t help but wonder what more we would be reading about if he’d followed Jesus’ call. Jesus pointed out to His followers, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Does this mean Jesus offers us the better way? Sure, we want to stay in a warm bed or sit on a soft couch. But what would happen if we gave up our comfort, our security, our old habits, and invited Him to give us the abundant life He has for us?

Fritz did finally get off the couch and onto his knees.

I hope we will do the same. **7**

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# Balancing ACT

TRY THESE PRACTICAL TIPS FOR  
AVOIDING OVERLOAD.

SCAN FOR AUDIO



DO YOU HAVE A HARD TIME saying no, setting boundaries, or recognizing when overload is occurring? Managing stress involves making choices, forming priorities, adopting attitudes, and taking actions that enable you to maximize your potential without overloading your abilities.

- **Decide** which issues are worth engaging your physical, emotional, and mental energy and which ones are better left alone or handled in a low-key manner. Many situations resolve themselves with time and patience. Being intense does not always improve a situation—but it can actually compound a problem, intimidate others, and incapacitate you. Often the way we relate to a situation is more exhausting than the situation itself!
- **Watch** for early signs of burnout before they become incapacitating. Some of the symptoms of burnout are inability to focus on a task, feeling rundown and drained of energy, constant negative thinking about your job or role, inability to cope with daily frustrations, and interpersonal conflict.
- **Change** your routine when feeling burned out. It may be time for physical, mental, and spiritual renewal. Give your brain and body a refreshing change. If you are sedentary and do a lot of heavy mental work, enjoy a day at the zoo (without reading the facts about every animal). If you do heavy construction or work at a monotonous job, take a class in an area of interest, or enjoy a day relaxing at the park with a challenging book. Remember that in God's view, there is nothing unimportant about your life. He has a plan for you.
- **Choose** ahead of time how you will relate to anticipated stressful situations. Most of us can identify emotional weak spots. We can strengthen weak areas by rehearsing better ways of meeting challenges and putting these strategies into practice. Dealing appropriately with people and situations is a great stress saver. Decide that you will do your best, then let God do the rest.

## *Often the way we relate to a situation is more exhausting than the situation itself.*

- **Mentally rehearse** calm and appropriate responses and practice putting things in perspective. The knowledge that you have dealt with a situation in a calm and thoughtful way instead of engaging in a lot of energy-draining, emotionally charged reactions helps you gain strength to respond to the many demands of the day. You are helping others think things through, as well as preserving your own resources!
- **Take time** out to reflect and pray about a problem before you act. Look at the big picture and try to find the positives in every situation. There is always a big picture to consider in every situation—a long-term goal as well as short-term plans. Consider what is best for the overall picture and resist the temptation to go mountain climbing over molehills.
- **Monitor** your schedule, including the amount and intensity of your activities. Even children today complain of having so many items in their schedule that they have no downtime, no time to relax. From soccer to cello, their days are more overscheduled than those of many adults, and they are suffering from stress as a result.
- **Avoid clutter.** Houses today are built 20 percent larger than just a decade ago, and we are filling them with more stuff than they can hold! That may be why self-storage and storage shed sales are such thriving businesses in America. The more we accumulate, the more we have to focus on the care, management, and expense of all that stuff. This drains time and energy that could be used for more useful, important, and refreshing enterprises. Simplify your life by getting rid of useless stuff!

### **BALANCE**

People who are chronically stressed often feel their lives are out of control. To many, life seems like a frantic relay race as they fly from project to project, playing catch-up and putting out fires instead of setting their own pace and schedule. Balancing your life puts you back in control and helps you avoid unnecessary stress. Here are some tips:

- **Limit** the number of decisions you make in a day and when you make them, as far as possible. Making decisions late at night and when you are hungry stresses the nervous system. Some decisions cannot be delayed, but others can be prioritized and attended to when you feel prepared. Some people have a character trait of needing to solve everything, understand everything, and direct everything *right now!* Learning to let go of this kind of control can be a good thing and make you a more pleasant person to be around.



*Pare down, or you'll wear down!*

- **Eliminate personal debt**, especially credit card debt, and don't buy on impulse. It is easy to rack up debt from impulse buying or buying when under stress. Denying an impulse purchase takes discipline and forces you to deal with stress in a more productive way. Remember that it only adds to stress to lie in bed at night wondering how to pay all those bills! One minister put it this way: "If the Lord doesn't send it, I don't spend it!" Many families commit to waiting 24 hours before making any purchase over a given amount, such as \$100. This is a great way to avoid needless spending and stressful debt.
- **Get there on time.** It is a great source of frustration and stress to always be running late. It affects those who are depending on you, as well as your own sense of control. If you habitually run late, remember there are people just as busy as you who get to their appointments on time. What is the secret to being on time? Don't overestimate how much you can squeeze into the time before your appointment, and don't underestimate how much time it will take you to pack, prepare, and travel to your destination. Be realistic in your assessment of what you can and cannot do in a given period of time, and plan to be at your appointments early. You will be more relaxed and in control when you get there.
- **Regulate** the rate of change taking place in your life at one time, including jobs, moving, travel, and even holidays. Set a realistic schedule and build consistency into your life.
- **Identify** your most important goals and prioritize your time accordingly. Pare down, or you'll wear down! Remember: Good is the enemy of best. There is no end of good things to do, but maybe we need to focus on what is best and give ourselves some breathing room.
- **Take time** to help others—it's a good way to put your own life in perspective. A self-centered life is an exhausting and stressful life. Taking an interest in the needs and goals of others can be a source of joy and fulfillment, as well as fill a vital role in your community. **J**

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# “ADJUST THE STRAPS”

DOES YOUR “YOKE” FEEL FAR FROM EASY?

I DON'T KNOW MUCH about yoke wearing. I'm not a farm girl, nor did I grow up around oxen that were yoked. But I did grow up hearing the Scripture about Jesus assuring us His yoke is easy. I'm guessing you're also familiar with Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Even though I'm uneducated when it comes to yoke wearing, when “my yoke” recently had some issues, I could quickly tell. The fit and feel were not right, certainly far from “easy.”

One day I was moaning to the Lord about my yoke. I thought He'd want to know how uncomfortable I felt carrying my load. The yoke seemed to be rubbing me raw in spots. The weight seemed off keel. The days of toil, without rest, felt too long. And the load was just too heavy.

As I cried out to Jesus, I stumbled over something I had written about a year previously. Occasionally, I will type out a prayer to Jesus and write whatever I think His response is. I know this is not “His word” that I would declare to His people as being a solid revelation. It was simply an imagined divine whisper that I heard. Yet those words I rediscovered moved me. They became a balm that ministered to a deep place in my heart.

They said: “Ruth, I am sorry that the yoke feels heavy. Let Me adjust the straps.”

A year after writing this, I allowed the words and imagery to minister to my yoked self. Tears streamed down my face as I gave my response: “Yes! Adjust the straps, Lord. Oh, and look—I am yoked in with You! You are pulling the weight too! We are tied in together, and You have just adjusted things so that the raw place will heal and You will carry the weight of the load. Thank You, Jesus! It does not mean that I will not need to do some work, but rather I need to be more intentional to work together with You. Instead of me trying to pull more than my share (unevenly), I need to feel and focus on that togetherness part—and just rest in You caring enough to adjust the straps.”

The tears came again when I shared this thought with a nurse friend who was feeling overwhelmed in her new job. This is also what I needed to tell a pastor's wife burned out from pulling a weight that felt unfair to her. And so I can't keep the impression to myself.

If your yoke feels heavy and uncomfortable, know that Jesus is willing and longing to adjust the straps. While He is adjusting the yoke, I encourage you to turn your head and look directly into the face of the One you are yoked with. There is much strength to be found. It might even move you to tears. Tears that will minister to the deep places in your heart. **7**

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*Ruth Boyd is a pastor's wife and currently working as the ministerial spouse coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission in Lebanon.*



# GOD Loves Me!



OUR FATHER GOD is so amazing, and He loves each one of us very much!  
Let's explore some of the different ways He shows His love for us.



## OUR LOVING FATHER GIVES US WONDERFUL GIFTS!

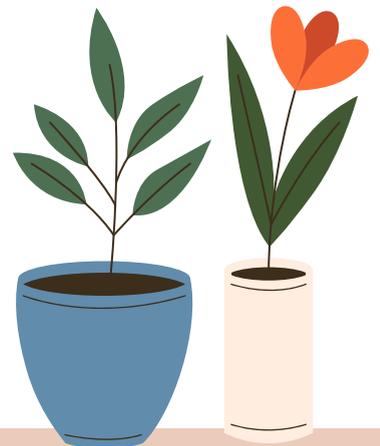
Read James 1:17. Every good gift we have in our lives comes from God's loving and generous hands! Wrap a box in sturdy paper and use tape to secure it. (You could also use a strong, plain gift bag or a plain sheet of paper.) With your family think of lots of good gifts God has given to you and write each gift on the box. He has given us more gifts than we can ever name or imagine! If you run out of space on one box, why not cover another box and keep writing more gifts and make a display of your gratitude?

## OUR LOVING FATHER FORGIVES US!

Read Psalm 103:3, 9-12. God doesn't want us to be discouraged and saddened when we make mistakes. He's already forgiven us completely through Jesus! He wipes all our sins away so completely that we can't find them ever again! Purchase water-soluble paper and write or draw your sins on the paper. Drop the paper into a bowl of water and watch it disappear. Or blow bubbles that will pop and disappear completely, just like your sins. Or fill a shallow tray or dish with salt or sand. Write your sins in the salt and then tilt and gently shake the dish until the words disappear. Or write them on a blackboard and wipe them away completely with a damp cloth. Just as you can never find the words again, your sins are wiped away forever.

## GOD'S LOVE IS EVERYWHERE!

God's character is loving, kind, forgiving, compassionate, and hundreds of other good things! Send everyone in your home on a treasure hunt to find objects that remind them of God's goodness, love, and compassion. Gather your "treasures" together and tell each other why you chose those objects.





## HUNT THE CROSSES

The shape of the cross is “hidden” in many things all around us, including windows, doors, furniture designs, trees, fences, signs, etc. Start looking for the shape of a cross when you walk along the way. Notice the reminders of Jesus “hiding” in full view. Take photos of them, or count them, and see how long it takes to find 100! It will probably be much quicker than you think once you start to look.

## ALL KINDS OF LOVE

Gather craft materials or a basket of natural materials. You can use whatever you have. Ask each person to think of one way God loves us and then create a heart-shaped object that illustrates that kind of love. When you have all finished your hearts, see if you can guess what kind of God’s love is being illustrated by the different hearts. Gather them all together in a bowl of God’s love and add more hearts whenever you want to. Or make hearts of similar sizes that can be strung on a garland for your home or attached to a wreath.



## A HEART FULL OF LOVE

Purchase a large heart-shaped bulletin board or cut a large heart out of paper or poster board. Decorate it and fill it with Bible verses about God’s love and pictures that illustrate His love. Read it whenever you need a hug from God and remember just how much He loves you!

## I KNOW GOD LOVES ME BECAUSE . . .

Play a game with your family. Sit in a circle and take turns saying, “I know God loves me because . . .” Complete the sentence simply. After the first person goes, the next person says, “I know God loves me because . . .” and then repeats the first person’s comment and adds a different one of their own. The third person repeats what the first and second people said, then adds another reason of their own. See how long you can make the list before someone breaks it! Help each other remember all the lovely comments because it’s wonderful to keep reminding each other of God’s love.



## OUR LOVING FATHER IS ALWAYS WITH US

God says that He will never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:8). God is always at your side, ready to help you, love you, take away your fears, and comfort you. Make something you can carry with you anytime to remind you that God is with you every moment of your life because He loves you. When I was a shy and frightened little girl, my mom stitched a heart-shaped button into my pockets as a reminder of her love and God’s love for me. Talk to your parents about what you could make or do.



## OUR LOVING FATHER CARES FOR US

Jesus told us to look at the birds and flowers and to notice how much God cares for them (Matthew 6:25-34). We know that God loves us much more than the birds and flowers! With your family watch some birds. Look carefully at some different flowers growing near you. Talk about what you can learn about God's loving care for you from the way He cares for the birds and the flowers.

## love GOD'S LOVE GOES ON FOREVER!

Cut a long strip of strong paper from the biggest sheet of paper you can find. Make it about 4 centimeters (1½ inches) wide. Lay it on the floor, make one-half twist in the paper, and tape the twisted end to the other end, leaving the half twist in place. Put your strip on the table and write Bible verses about God's love on the strip until you reach the beginning again. You should discover that you have written on both sides of the strip and His love never ends! Hang the strip on a couple of pegs and crease it so it makes the shape of a heart.



## CROWNED WITH BLESSINGS

When Jesus was baptized, God announced the blessing: "This is My Son. I love Him very much, and He brings me great joy!" God pronounces that blessing over all His children who choose to serve Him. Make a paper crown for each person in your family. Write the same blessing on each crown and insert the person's name. "This is my daughter, Lucy. I love her very much, and she brings me great joy!" Decorate the crowns and wear them together for your Friday evening meal and worship. How do the crowns change how you see yourself and the other people in your family?



I LOVE YOU CARD

Use your best craft materials to make a card for God to tell Him how much you love Him. He can see it and read it, and He will be delighted by it! Then make an imaginary card from God to you, telling you how much He loves you too! Read Psalm 145 and 1 Corinthians 13 to give you some ideas. Or read the children's letter from God at [www.fathersloveletter.com](http://www.fathersloveletter.com).

*Karen Holford writes from England, where she never tires of learning more about God's love. It's always a joyful and magnificent adventure!*

## *East-Central Africa Division*

In December 2021 two unions in Tanzania held a pastors' kids (PK) congress with an attendance of about 860. The PKs enjoyed the fellowship together along with Musa and Winfrida Mitekaro.



*Pastors' kids enjoy a congress just for them.*

In May 2022 East Kenya Union Conference held a ministerial spouses graduation. The 289 graduates were from the South Kenya Conference, Nyamira Conference, South East Kenya Field, and Nyamira West Field. Their spouses joined them in the celebration, which included singing, a graduation sermon, a charge, prayers of dedication, conferring of certificates, and cake sharing.



*Ministerial spouses graduate in East Kenya.*

In South Sudan Attached Territory ministerial spouses supported their husbands during an ordination service in May 2022. We are very excited to see team ministry flourishing in this fast-growing territory.



*Leaders ordain ministers in South Sudan.*



## NORTH EAST CONGO UNION MISSION

North East Congo Union Mission held a spouses convention in July 2022. With joy the spouses received a Kiswahili ministerial spouses journal. We praise the Lord that this resource has been made available in the language they understand.



Ministerial spouses in North East Congo Union Mission enjoy The Journal in their language.

## Northern Asia-Pacific Division

### “I WILL GO”: MONGOLIA MISSION MINISTERIAL FAMILY RETREAT

The Mongolia Mission Ministerial Association (Pr. Nyam-suren) and the Ministerial Spouses Association (MSA, Ms. Angela Han) held a four-day ministerial family retreat and training session in July 2022 at a resort outside Ulaanbaatar. It was attended by 27 families among 30 ministers in Mongolia. About 120 people gathered to enjoy fellowship after more than two years of not gathering due to COVID-19.

Dr. Jonas Arrais, the division Ministerial Association director, and Mrs. Raquel Arrais, the MSA director, were the key speakers. They spent four days with the participants, praising together, praying together, worshipping together, studying together, counseling together, eating together, laughing together, and dedicating the pastors’ families.

Every morning and evening Jonas and Raquel shared their testimony as ministerial partners, telling experiences of their married life from their book *Joys and Challenges of the Pastoral Family*. These lectures were very touching and well-received, introducing necessary qualities and practical, applicable lessons to all participants.

Pastor Han Suk Hee, the Mongolian Mission president, shared God’s message in the opening service, throwing out the challenging question: “Which one is first, church or family?” During Sabbath worship he preached about “YES in Jesus,” highlighting that there will be nothing impossible when we trust that all God’s promises are YES in Jesus.

While fathers and mothers were busy in their breakout training seminars, children enjoyed a variety of activities, such as sports, games, oil painting, drama, and baking cookies. Every evening all family members participated in family-based fun activities.



The ministerial family retreat offered encouragement, spiritual support, and a chance to fellowship with families from different districts and churches. Pastoral families hope to have more chances of gathering in the near future to better equip families for ministry.



Pastoral families in Mongolia gather for a four-day retreat.

### MONGOLIA MISSION SHEPHERDESS TRAINING

A training for ministerial spouses was held at Duut Resort, coordinated by Mrs. Chun Eun Kyung, Ministerial Spouses Association director of the Mongolia Mission (MM). The training was conducted to foster social connections among the group, learn from one another, share inspiring stories of God’s blessings, provide support, and share the love of Jesus through community service across Mongolia. The meeting was fun-filled and involved singing, praying, a Q&A session, and lively discussions.

During the event, ministerial spouses talked about the challenges of being a pastor’s spouse and how to cope with these challenges. One participant said, “To face the challenges of being a pastor’s spouse, you can choose to be who you really are in Christ and not somebody else.” Mrs. Chun also shared her personal experiences as a pastor’s wife for the past 24 years.

A special prayer was offered for Mrs. Bae Ji Hyun and her husband, Pastor Yang Eui Shik, who accepted a call to serve back in their home country after serving as missionaries in Mongolia for four years.

All the participants felt that they have been called to the ministry and expressed their love and commitment to God. The Mongolia Ministerial Spouses Association plans to conduct the following programs: weekly meetings via Zoom for Bible study, group prayer, and fellowship; monthly home meetings and visitations; seminars and training sessions with guest speakers from the Northern Asia-Pacific Division; and a ministerial family retreat.



Ministerial spouses from Mongolia enjoy training and fellowship.



SCAN ME

# WORLD CHURCH QUARTERLY DAYS OF PRAYER

April 1, 2023 | July 1, 2023 | October 7, 2023 | January 6, 2024

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

