

STRONGER TOGETHER



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

SOCIAL SKILLS

STRONGER TOGETHER

Issue 3
2023



SCAN TO READ ONLINE

ON THE COVER

This issue focuses on social skills, such as considering what you and others say, using active listening, practicing hospitality, and dealing with loneliness. Paul called the church “the body of Christ” (Romans 12), which means we need to work together in order to be functional and content. Whether you’re more extroverted or introverted, you’ll find helpful advice and tips to get along better with yourself, others, and God.

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



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

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Printed in the U.S.A.
<https://www.ministerialassociation.org/spouses/>

TOGETHER WE
ARE ALWAYS

Stronger



SCAN FOR AUDIO

JOHN HAD ALWAYS FELT a strong calling to serve God. He had spent years studying the Bible and sharpening his pastoral skills. But one area of his life had always proven difficult to navigate: working together as a team with his wife, Kelly. While he loved her deeply, they often found themselves at odds regarding their respective careers. John felt that his work as a pastor was more important than anything else, while Kelly was equally devoted to her job as a business executive.

Over time, the tensions between them grew, and they struggled to find a way to work together as a team for the glory and honor of God. John knew his marriage was in trouble, but he didn't know how to fix it. He felt he was failing his wife and his calling to serve God.

One day John received a call from another conference in another state. He was excited at the prospect of a new challenge, but he knew it would mean uprooting his entire life, including Kelly's professional career. He sat down with her and told her about the opportunity, hoping they could devise a plan to allow them to continue their ministry together.

But Kelly was hesitant. She didn't want to leave her job and start over again in a new city, and she made it clear that her career was just as important to her as John's work as a pastor. As they tried to navigate this difficult situation, John struggled increasingly with his sense of purpose and calling. He began questioning whether he was making a difference in the church or the community.

In the end, they could not find a way to work together as a team. The strain became too much, and they decided to separate. John and Kelly, whose names have been changed to protect their identities, were friends we loved dearly. Our hearts were saddened to see them drift apart in this way.

LESSONS

When we were pastoring churches, I constantly reminded myself that even though the conference employed my husband, God called us as a family to serve Him. And there is nothing more beautiful than to work as a team in ministry.

Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10 says: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up." We are not meant to walk alone but to walk together, hand in hand, with our spouse.

When we walk together, we can share in each other's joys and sorrows and lean on each other during times of trial and hardship. We can learn from one another, grow together, and inspire others to improve. But for this to become a reality, we must put ourselves aside because self does not allow us to work as a team.



Together We Are Always Stronger

Ellen G. White reminds us, “There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God” (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251).

Indeed, as we walk together in ministry, we must remember that our goal is not our success or recognition but rather the advancement of God’s kingdom and the salvation of souls. Therefore, we must put aside our desires and work together to achieve this goal, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us. Ellen White also reminds us, “We are not left alone in this work. We are laborers together with God, in partnership with divine resources” (*Review and Herald*, Oct. 12, 1886, par. 17).

As we collaborate in ministry, it is essential to cultivate a spirit of openness to seek counsel from one another and to yield to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In addition, our collective purpose must be grounded in a deep love for Christ and for those we aim to serve. Only then can we work together effectively toward our common goal.

To achieve this, we must prioritize humility and recognize that none of us has all the answers. Each of us brings unique perspectives and experiences, and we must value and respect diversity of thought and approach to our ministry. We must be willing to listen actively to each other and consider alternative viewpoints, recognizing that we share a common goal and desire to serve God and others. We must also pray together. That brings us closer to God and to one another. When we pray, study, and talk about life together, we open our hearts, unite, and grow together.

Our effectiveness in ministry depends on our willingness to work together as a team. May the Holy Spirit help us understand that we are always stronger together. **J**

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

“We are not left alone in this work. We are laborers together with God, in partnership with divine resources.”



Special Quotes

by Ellen White

In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.

The Desire of Ages, p. 497

Students are to be taught the Christlikeness of exhibiting a kindly interest, a social disposition, toward those who are in the greatest need, even though these may not be their own chosen companions. At all times and in all places Jesus manifested a loving interest in the human family.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 172

All who have been benefited by the labors of God's servant should, according to their ability, unite with him in working for the salvation of souls. This is the work of all true believers, ministers and people. They should keep the grand object ever in view, each seeking to fill his proper position in the church, and all working together in order, harmony, and love.

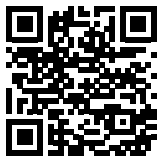
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 238

Christian sociability is altogether too little cultivated by God's people. . . . Students should be taught that they are not independent atoms, but that each one is a thread which is to unite with other threads in composing a fabric. In no other department can this instruction be more effectually given than in the school home. Here students are daily surrounded by opportunities which, if improved, will greatly aid in developing the social traits of their characters. It lies in their own power so to improve their time and opportunities as to develop a character that will make them happy and useful. Those who shut themselves up within themselves, who are unwilling to be drawn upon to bless others by friendly associations, lose many blessings; for by mutual contact minds receive polish and refinement; by social intercourse, acquaintances are formed and friendships contracted which result in a unity of heart and an atmosphere of love which is pleasing in the sight of heaven.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 172

Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous. By the grace of God you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 361



SEVEN TIPS FOR BREAKING FREE OF HURTFUL WORDS IN MINISTRY

“Why don’t you become a maid when you grow up?” my dad said when I was a teen.

To this day I’m not sure if he was serious or joking, but one thing is sure: his words made a lasting impression on me.

Words spoken by parishioners can also leave impressions, both positive and negative. They can arouse emotions such as shame, happiness, or anger. The term “living in a fishbowl” is a reality for pastoral families. Church members may offer their opinions on how our children should be raised, how we should dress, sit, speak, or even treat our spouse.

Sadly, many pastors’ spouses become bitter and exhibit a cold or suppressed countenance in public. Not being sure of who should be pleased can be a terrifying experience as pastoral families move from one church to another. Sadly, if there is no mentorship or support from the spouse, it can become a lonely world filled with uncertainty and fear.

Jesus recognized the power of words when He spoke to Mary, who was caught in adultery. In John 8:1-11 we see the piercing accusations and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They sought to trap Jesus by using Mary as a pawn to carry out their devious plans. Even though she was not the subject of their scheme, unfortunately her life made her easy bait for them. Having been with several men, she must have been told many things that were less than pleasant. But the kind, powerful, and gentle words of the Savior mattered the most to her.


CONNECTION

Mary’s life may seem opposite to that of a pastor’s spouse. Clearly, she was not emulated as a woman of dignity and class. But take a closer look at her, and you might see similarities. She also felt like she was in a fishbowl, judged by all who saw her, and she was confused by her role.

Perhaps you are feeling lost in ministry, not sure of your purpose. Maybe you’ve been hurt by the words and criticisms of parishioners and even your spouse. Maybe you’re struggling to meet the expectations of the brethren and need to find peace and comfort from Jesus like Mary did. There is hope—you can have a successful ministry despite the harsh words spoken by others. Here are seven tips for breaking free of hurtful words in your ministry:

“Living in a fishbowl” is a reality for pastoral families.

- 1. Focus on self-care.** The Bible says in Jeremiah 31:3 that God loves us with an everlasting love. Jeremiah 1:5 says that you are set apart and appointed. Take care of your mental health by surrounding yourself with healthy relationships. Avoid people who gossip about others and complain a lot. Schedule at least one day each month to do something for yourself with friends, with your family, or even alone.
- 2. Find a prayer partner.** Commit to praying with a partner you trust and can confide in when you feel overwhelmed. Find that safe friend who will pray with and for you.
- 3. Pray for your enemies.** Ask God to give you a heart of compassion. Many parishioners have personal problems. Ask Jesus to tell you what to pray for them, and don't be afraid to let them know you're praying for them. James 5:16 says that prayer makes a difference.
- 4. Find your sense of purpose in ministry.** Many pastors' spouses get lost in the shadows and expectations of previous pastors' spouses. Use your gifts and talents to glorify God in your own way (see Ephesians 4:11, 12).
- 5. Correct bad behaviors in love.** It's OK as the pastor's spouse to speak up and correct behaviors that are hurtful to you and others. Follow the principles of the Bible found in 2 Timothy 2:23-26. In meekness and in love, be gentle to all as you offer instruction.
- 6. Avoid venting to your spouse.** The saying goes, “Hurting people hurt people.” It's easy to vent to your spouse and feel angry about ministry. Remember that the devil is the culprit behind all of this. According to Ephesians 6:11-18, we should put on the whole armor of God so we can withstand the wiles of the devil.
- 7. Socialize with your parishioners.** Research shows that interacting with others trains our brains to improve cognitively. The more you socialize, the better you understand the people you serve. If you're an introvert, remember that a little time socializing is better than no time at all. Roman 12:18 reminds us to try to live peaceably with everyone.

Yes, words do matter, so consider the words you say to the people you serve in ministry. Sometimes we unknowingly hurt people by our behaviors and speech. Let us continue to turn to God so He can direct our walk and our talk. 

Stacy Harvey is an assistant professor and certified nurse educator. She is married to Christopher Harvey, senior pastor at the Fayette SDA Church. They have been married for 17 years and have two teenagers, Jonathan and Kristashay.





“I’M GOING TO YOUR HOUSE TODAY”

WHY HOSPITALITY MATTERS

AS A NEWLYWED, I was amazed to find out that well-known Adventist author Nancy Van Pelt lived in our new town. She wrote the book *Creative Hospitality*, among others. When she discovered that I’d met one of her neighbors who was fighting cancer, she invited all of us to her home for a meal. I felt truly honored to be seated at her tastefully set table, savoring her carefully prepared food. What made an even deeper impression on me was her genuine pleasure in sharing her comfortable suburban home, the interest she took in all of us, and how she enjoyed the fellowship, even taking a photo of our group so she could remember us.

I’ve worked with my husband in student literature evangelism over the years. We’ve knocked on the doors of all kinds of homes, and the homes speak about the people who live there. Some breathe opulence, some not so much. Some are trim and

neat like their occupants, some not so much. Some are highly personalized with seasonal decorations, nameplates, and placards, while others are sadly neglected. But they are all a place someone calls home.

There’s something special about going to someone’s home. Being invited into anyone’s sanctuary is a unique opportunity for connection.

FOOD FUELS FELLOWSHIP

Have you ever been struck by the fact that food and fellowship often go hand in hand? In Asia it would be unusual, and perhaps impossible, to complete an important business transaction without the parties eating together first. Many times in Western culture a date happens over pizza or ice cream, as eating affords a chance to actually sit back, relax, and connect. Imagine a birthday party without food!

When these two merge—an invitation to a home and sitting down for a shared meal—something powerful happens. Perhaps this explains why Romans 12:13 plainly exhorts us to “practice hospitality” (NIV).



There's something special about going to someone's home.

OPEN THE DOOR

In Bible times, hospitality was truly needed and became inherent in the culture. In an article entitled “Hospitality in the Hebrew Bible,” Peter Altmann explains: “People away from home need protection, shelter, and food. They are at the mercy of the locals. In response, the Hebrew Bible makes a central value of hospitable care for such outsiders—whether travelers, refugees (those forced to relocate), and even neighbors (who are foreigners to the host’s residence).”¹ Jesus Himself often needed to rely on the generosity of others as an itinerant preacher.

One day we find Jesus in the fertile, spring-fed oasis of Jericho, the “City of Palms,” flocked by crowds on their way to the Passover in Jerusalem. Our binoculars focus on a small, fast-moving figure, determinedly running ahead of the crowd and climbing a fig tree, where he sits and waits.

As a tax collector, this man has low popularity. People despise citizens like Zacchaeus, not only for being dishonest but because they see them as traitors, working for the hated Romans. Furthermore, who would think that a tax collector could ever change?

But things are not always as they seem. Aching inside, this wealthy, seemingly in-need-of-nothing man took note when he heard that one of Jesus’ disciples was also a tax collector. A flame of hope for a better life was lit in his heart. *If only I could see Jesus myself*, he thinks. *But why would the great Jewish teacher take time to talk to someone like me?*

There he is, in the fig tree waiting, when astonishingly, the swirling crowd stops beneath him and Jesus looks straight at him, saying those famous words: “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house” (Luke 19:5).

Excitement bubbles up inside him as he scurries down the tree. The crowd makes space for him now. What else can they do? They start moving in the direction of Zacchaeus’ house. But wait—these people know him, and he knows he has cheated them. Zacchaeus seizes this moment of truth and bravely declares to everyone that he will give half of what he owns to the poor and return fourfold what he has taken unjustly. Now the crowd is in shock.

A PERSONAL VISIT

Jesus comes into Zacchaeus’ home, his sanctuary. They share a meal, undisturbed by the restless crowd. Ellen White says, “Not only was Zacchaeus himself blessed, but all his household with him. Christ went to his home to give him lessons of truth, and to instruct his household in the things of the kingdom. They had been shut out from the synagogues by the contempt of rabbis and worshipers; but now, the most favored household in all Jericho, they gathered in their own home about the divine Teacher, and heard for themselves the words of life.”²

This was a personal visit. Jesus didn’t send someone else to teach Zacchaeus but showed up Himself. When He came to save our planet, He did so in person. We all know that when we really want to show someone we care, there’s nothing like visiting in person. FaceTime is helpful, but technology is not the same as face-to-face contact.

*When He
came to
save our
planet,
He did so
in person.*


Eye contact is a vital social cue that tells us someone is interested and listening. This cue “can often be missing in digital communication. While you can see the faces of your colleagues onscreen, they are looking at your face on their screen, and not into the camera. Direct eye contact is impossible via current digital hardware.”³ After people had to rely on digital communication during the pandemic, in-person contact is more important than ever.

Social scientists tell us that physical proximity fuels relationships. “The closer you live to another person, the more likely you are to be friends with them despite the growing use and impact of social media.”⁴ Also, people campaigning for political parties or candidates go house to house. Why? It works. “Personal influence is a power. The more direct our labor for our fellow men, the greater good will be accomplished. . . . You must come close to those for whom you labor, that they may not only hear your voice, but shake your hand, learn your principles, and realize your sympathy.”⁵

INVITING JESUS IN

Zacchaeus was overjoyed (Luke 19:6). He couldn’t wait for Jesus to come in and be with him. He invited Jesus all the way in, offered Him food, ate with Him, and listened to Him. They had a relationship now. Jesus came not only into his house, his sanctuary, but into his mind and soul. “It is when Christ is received as a personal Savior that salvation comes to the soul. Zacchaeus had received Jesus, not merely as a passing guest in his home, but as One to abide in the soul temple.”⁶

Just like the Shekinah glory filled the wilderness tabernacle (Exodus 40:34), God’s glory filled Zacchaeus to overflowing that day. And Zacchaeus followed through on his promise to give back what was stolen. The “very first response of Zacchaeus to the love of Christ was in manifesting compassion toward the poor and suffering.”⁷

Jesus can’t wait to come in and eat with us, Laodiceans as we are, so He stands at our door and knocks (Revelation 3:20). The One who keeps the universe going wants to sit and talk to us at our home. Even so, sometimes when I hear that knock, I say, “My house is too messy. Don’t come in now,” or “I’m too busy.” But I realize that like Zacchaeus, I need what Jesus has, so I want to simply say, “Come in, Jesus. I need You.” 



¹ <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/people/related-articles/hospitality-in-the-hebrew-bible/>

² *The Desire of Ages* p. 556.

³ <https://theconversation.com/why-facetime-cant-replace-face-to-face-time-during-social-distancing-136206>

⁴ <https://science.rpi.edu/itws/news/social-media-study-shows-proximity-strongest-predictor-friendship>

⁵ Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 439.

⁶ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 556.

⁷ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 555.

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TIPS TO

THRIVE



SCAN FOR AUDIO

THE INTERRUPTED PRAYER

WHO WAS MY SPIRITUAL MENTOR? Besides my missionary parents and teachers, it was Hilda . . . a 50-year-old woman when I was 15. Hilda came to our house on Mondays each week; she cleaned house in the mornings and spent the afternoons ironing.

After school and homework, I planted a chair in front of Hilda's ironing board, and we talked till she finished. She told many stories of having four young children to raise alone after her husband's death. With almost no education, she did domestic work to earn a living for the five of them. She was always below poverty level, but the Lord came through time after time after time.

I'll always remember one particular story she told me. She had worked all day, but the woman she worked for said her husband had not returned from work, leaving her with no money. She asked Hilda to return the next day for her pay.

So Hilda turned to her best Friend, Jesus. "Lord, we have no food in the house, and now I can't buy any. Please, Jesus, provide something, at least for the children. It doesn't matter whether I eat or not."

As she walked past a certain house, a woman came running out. "Lady, does your family like watery rice?" she asked Hilda. "My rice turned out all soupy, and I know my family won't eat it, but I hate for it to go to waste. Will you take it, please?"

Hilda walked on, carrying watery rice and thanking the Lord for providing an evening meal for them. Things such as this happened again and again for her.


HIS HANDS

Late one Friday afternoon I saw my mom's homemade bread cooling in the kitchen. Remembering how much Hilda liked it, I took some and ran the short distance to her house (which was one small room only). After knocking vigorously on the open door, I looked inside and saw her kneeling by her chair.

Suddenly I felt very awkward. So when she came to the door, I thrust the bread into her hands and ran home. I didn't see her until our usual Monday encounter at the ironing board.

She started by explaining, "Last Friday I hoped to get off work early enough to walk to the store to buy bread. But when I finally finished, I saw I could get there and pay for the bread, but I couldn't make it back home before sundown. I didn't want to be hurrying home from an errand when the Sabbath began, so I knelt and prayed, 'Lord, we don't have much to eat for Sabbath, so we really need some bread.' Then I heard a knock at the door, and there you were, holding out bread to me!"

I felt so honored to have been the one the Lord used to answer His faithful servant's plea for food!

We have a wonderful heavenly Father who knows our needs and answers prayers. Go to Him with all your challenges; cast your worries upon Him and trust in Him. He is never early, but He is never late either. Remember how He has led you in the past and trust in His love and care for the present. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7, NIV). 

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



THE MAN IN THE LOBBY

WHAT OCCUPIES MY MIND? HOW ABOUT YOURS?

WHEN I'M NOT IN CLASS, I work at the visitor center desk on our college campus. I make sure the phones are answered, the visitor center stays clean, and people are welcomed when they come to campus.

Last year I noticed an older gentleman visiting our campus every day—actually every meal—all semester long. I remember actually feeling scared the first time I saw him because he literally waited hours in the lobby for food and would ask every half hour or so how long it would be until the cafeteria opened for dinner.

He can't hear well and his mind is failing him, so I have to raise my voice so he can hear and understand me.

He broke down in tears, speaking over and over again of heaven.

My coworkers and I looked him up a few weeks ago. We found out that he is an alumnus of Union College and that he did great things for God and the Adventist Church as a missionary pilot in Peru. He lost his wife recently and lives a few blocks away, walking every day to our campus.

I'll admit, it's hard to have patience sometimes. And sometimes he will say something to someone passing by and I struggle to stifle a laugh.

Until the other day.



MIND MATTERS

I was the only one at the desk. My boss was in her office nearby. The man was sitting in the lobby again, this time reading over a small index card. I think it had a Bible promise on it.

He broke down in tears, speaking over and over again of heaven and the joy that awaits us there. Of how he would be able to hear and his mind would work again. He repeated himself so often it could have become annoying, but it wasn't.

I turned 20 recently. I randomly joked on one of my social media platforms that I have two decades down, and we'll see how many more I get. But the truth is, with an average lifespan, I've already, even as young as I am, lived one-fourth of my life. Sixty or so years from now, I'll be his age.

My mind probably won't work so well, and my hearing will be blasted from decades of too much bass music in the car. But in my not-so-present-mindedness, what will be on my mind?

Will it be the things of this world? The pleasures, the troubles, the worries? Or will it be on Jesus?

Thank you, man in the lobby. See you next time I work at the desk, and then someday—as you love to say every day—“See you in heaven.” **L**

Charles Metz is a theology and communication major at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. You can read more about the man in the lobby, Clyde Peters, in the book *The Man Who Jumped Off Clouds: Adventures of a Jungle Pilot* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000).

FLOURISH

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Are you overwhelmed by emotions?

Learn to Flourish in Life!

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<https://ted.adventist.org/family/flourish>



FEELING LONELY?

IF SO, YOU'RE NOT ALONE . . . BUT THERE'S HELP.

SCAN FOR AUDIO



IT'S THREE DECADES AGO, and I'm sitting in the park with my young children, praying for a friend. As an introvert, I don't often feel lonely. But with my family far away and no other young families in our tiny church, my heart longs for the friendship of another young mom.

Soon a mother arrives at the park, and our children play in the playground together. She's also called Karen, and she's the organist at the village church. We start having playdates with our children, and now, 30 years later, we're still in touch. God sent the friend I wanted just when I needed her.

THE CHALLENGE OF LONELINESS

Loneliness happens when there's a deficit between what we want in our friendships and how we experience our relationships. This

will be unique for each person because we all have different expectations, and we all experience our relationships in different ways. For some pastoral spouses, loneliness can be one of the biggest challenges of ministry life. Frequent moves, distant families, busy church districts, differing cultures, and confusing messages about being friends with church members can all make it difficult to build and maintain the supportive relationships that are crucial for our well-being.

Humans are wired for connection. Even in Eden, a perfect world where Adam spoke face to face with his Father, God declared that it wasn't good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Recent research has highlighted the dangers of human loneliness. When we're lonely, our immunity can be lowered, heightening our risk of infection and disease. Chronic loneliness can be as bad for humans as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Loneliness affects our mental, physical, and spiritual health. Jesus told us that the two most important laws are loving God and loving others because He knew they are vital for our well-being (Matthew 22:36-40).

Humans are wired for connection.

An experience that is very lonely for one person may not feel like loneliness for someone else. If you're feeling lonely, it's important to think about how you define loneliness. Is it the number of friends you have, or the amount of time you spend doing something with friends? Then think about the kind of relationships that would help you feel less lonely. What do you most need from others to help you experience closeness and reduce your risk of loneliness?

NOT ALONE

When we're lonely, we're not alone. Many people feel lonely. Even extroverted people who have lots of friends can still feel isolated, whereas an introvert might be searching for one close friend. Some pastoral spouses reach out to other SDA pastoral spouses and make friends. Some find friends among their local Christian communities. Some join gyms and clubs or start craft or cooking classes in their home. Others learn how to manage good friendships within their local congregation. We all find different ways to build the important connections we need.

Many characters in the Bible experienced loneliness. Elijah felt alone when he thought he was the only prophet in Israel (1 Kings 18:22). David felt lonely when he wrote Psalm 142. Jesus felt alone in the Garden of Gethsemane. The woman at the well, Zacchaeus, the woman caught in adultery, lepers, and the woman with the issue of blood all felt socially isolated.

There's no stigma about feeling lonely. It's a normal human experience that encourages us to seek friends and connect with others. Life is complex, and we are all stronger, happier,

healthier, and safer when we can share our skills, wisdom, emotions, and resources. When we admit our sense of aloneness, we can start reaching out to other lonely people rather than waiting for others to find us.

Here are some practices to help offset loneliness.

1. **Remember that God is with you.** Our loving Father knows it's not good for us to be alone. He reassures us that He's always close beside us and will never leave us (Deuteronomy 31:8; Romans 8:38, 39). Set a timer for each hour to remind yourself that God is always present. Imagine the conversations you would like to have with Him and listen to what He would like to say to you. Or give yourself a big hug and imagine Jesus is hugging you.
2. **Audit your friendships.** Make a list of your friends, past and present. Which friendships filled you up and energized you and which ones drained you? Are there friendships that are worth rekindling or nourishing—even if you are many miles apart? Arrange regular online conversations. Share prayer requests, read the same devotional book and discuss your reflections, or find some other online activities to share. Or choose a charity and raise funds together.




3. **Look around.** Jesus noticed people on the edges of society and on the edges of crowds. Ask God to open your eyes to the people on the edges of your life who need friendship. Do they need a listening ear, a hug, an encouraging word, or a helping hand? Maybe they need to know that they matter to someone else, or maybe they'd like someone to share in their special interests or hobbies. Listen to their stories, find out what they enjoy, and do something amazingly kind for them. I found it's often easier to make friends with others who are new to our church or community.



Loneliness can be a source of misery, or it can be a catalyst for creativity and kindness.

4. **Scatter kindness.** Being kind is an excellent antidote to loneliness and sadness. Whenever we plan or do acts of kindness, however small, it helps release the hormone oxytocin into our brains. This is the lovely hormone that helps mothers bond with their babies, and it gives us a warm, peaceful, and joyful sense of being loved. Even if we're being kind to others in anonymous ways, we can still experience the healthy sense of connection and well-being we usually get from close friendships. Check out live:kind at <https://ted.adventist.org/live-kind/> and scroll down to find 14 lists of kind things to do. You'll find free ways to be kind and ideas for things you can do without even leaving home.
5. **Start a loneliness mission.** One of the greatest gifts we can give to our communities is bringing lonely people together for care and companionship. Your church could host vegetarian dinner evenings, run crafternoons (afternoon craft groups), or start a walking club that lonely people can join. Make friends with those who come along and bring joy and kindness to their lives.

Loneliness can be a source of misery, or it can be a catalyst for creativity and kindness. Even if you don't feel alone right now, look out for others who may be feeling alone and be a channel of God's love into their lonely hearts. 

Karen Holford was one of the world's shyest pastoral wives when she married her husband, Bernie. But with his loving care and friendship, she is now director of Family, Women, and Children's Ministries for the Trans-European Division.

Conformity AND THE CHRISTIAN



SCAN FOR AUDIO

WHAT KIND OF CONFORMIST ARE YOU?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT the need to follow along with what a group of people are doing to avoid feeling left out or made fun of? The feelings that arise in such a situation can increase anxiety, give us sweaty palms, elevate our heart rate, and cause butterflies in our stomach. How do we respond to the stressful situation? Do we act the same as the group, do we leave, or do we confront the issue? Why is it so hard to stand alone?

I teach social psychology, “a science that studies how situations influence us, with special attention to how people view and affect one another.”¹ One of the most popular experiments studied in my class is the group conformity experiment.

One video I show to students follows a young woman who comes to a doctor’s office for an appointment. While she’s waiting to be called, a bell rings, and all the other people in the waiting room stand up and sit back down. The bell continues to ring every few minutes, and everyone continues to stand up and sit down. After the third ring, the young woman stands up too.

One by one the people are called until she is alone in the waiting room. Other people start arriving, and she continues to follow the bell and convinces others to do the same. When the new people ask her why she is doing it, she replies, “Because everyone else did.” When interviewed, she says she felt an immediate relief that she conformed, even if she did not know why she had to stand up.

THREE TYPES OF CONFORMITY

There are three types of conformity. One is acceptance. For this category, you honestly believe that what the group stands for is right and you do what they ask you to do. The second is compliance, which is conforming and carrying out an order even though you do not believe in it. The third is obedience, doing what you are asked to do because of laws or because a higher authority requests it, and you do not question it.²

According to researchers Myers and Twenge, absolute obedience can be coerced if you cannot see the firsthand effects of your actions on someone else or if you do not know the other people personally. If someone you know and trust, someone you have worked with for a long time, gives you an order, it’s harder to refuse. Also, if the request comes from a well-respected institution, it’s harder to not conform.



On the other hand, if a group stands up together, it can create a liberating effect so that more people stand against the request. The size and status of the group will also affect conformity. A public decision has the highest conformity response. It's harder to change a decision or action once it is in motion. People will be less likely to change their minds because they don't want to apologize for wrongdoing, as it makes them vulnerable and not in control.³

CHRISTIAN IMPLICATIONS

What does conformity have to do with Christianity? Throughout history, following God's precepts has not always been the trendy way. There are several Bible characters who were truly God conformists and worldly nonconformists. I think of Noah, who stood alone with his family. Abraham, despite living in an idol-worshipping city, worshiped the true God and decided to follow God's command to go to an unknown land. Moses stayed faithful despite being offered all a person could want in luxury by the pharaoh. Ruth followed the true God despite having to leave her family. David stayed faithful in the midst of challenges. Esther obeyed God's calling even with death looming near. Daniel and his three friends stayed firm despite the threat of a fiery furnace and the lions' den. Paul suffered so much and never denied Christ. Throughout the ages, God has had individuals who follow His teaching and His Word.

We recently watched a play at the Pacific Union College church about the Anabaptist movement. Most of the founders believed wholeheartedly in Bible teachings about baptism, so much so that they were willing to die and be martyred for their beliefs. Then we see the Quakers, who stood against the laws of the land in the United States to help in the underground railroad and fight against slavery. A few people in every country in Europe helped hide Jews and stood against the Nazis despite their death threats.

On the other hand, the Bible shows examples of groups that conformed to the world and to the enemy of God. From the time the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they were seduced by the high places of the Canaanites and Moabites and by the false prophet Balaam (see Numbers 22). The high places were used for idolatrous worship, which promoted sexual immorality of all types and was in total denial of God's supreme precepts.

Only a small group remained faithful, the Levites. Later, the kings of Israel and Judah—starting with Solomon and continuing with Jeroboam, Ahab, Jehoram, Manasseh, and most of



Throughout history, following God's precepts has not always been the trendy way.

the other kings until the conquest of Judah by Babylon—brought the perverse practices of the surrounding nations to the people of God and to the Temple itself. These kings influenced the people of Israel and Judah so much that it was hard not to conform to the idolatry present everywhere. The Bible says that “the children of Israel secretly did against the Lord their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities” (2 King 17:9).

WHAT NOW?


You might feel at times as did the prophets, the Levites, the Christians in the Roman Empire, and the Reformers back in the Dark Ages—that you are a minority if you do not conform to the new acceptable ways of the world. But remember what God said to Elijah when he felt alone: “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18).

Paul says in Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Parents have the supreme responsibility to help their children get to know God for themselves and develop that relationship with Him. Praying as a family and reading and discussing the Bible together every day should become the top priority for every family in these end times. It helps us conform with the Word of God instead of the world around us. Encourage prayerful reflection on God's Word and time with God either

before work and school or before bed. It will be a habit that will provide an armor of defense against evil. One way we can bring constructive conformity to our families is by modeling godly behavior. Be an example for your children. May they see you on your knees and see you open God's Word. Demonstrating God's love to others despite hatred thrown your way is another way to show conformity to God's precepts.

God is calling you to get to know Him as the supreme authority, closer than any parent or friend relationship on this earth. He asks us to trust that His Word is above any institution. We are to do our best to obey our country's laws and our leaders in the government and our church but not when they go against God's Word. May we be worthy to suffer when we are persecuted for His name's sake.

May nothing—our jobs, our families, public opinion, our health, our possessions—separate us from our heavenly Father and His ultimate redemption of this world. “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good” (3 John 1:11). I challenge you to conform to our beloved Savior, who will redeem us from sin forever. 

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SCAN FOR AUDIO



THE GRASS IS Always Greener . . .

OVER THE SEPTIC TANK?

A FEW YEARS AGO my pastor-husband, Richard, and I decided to retire. We wanted to move from San Diego, California, to Tennessee, where we could live in the country and be closer to our family in Ontario, Canada. My husband noticed an ad in the *Pacific Union Recorder* for a house for sale in a place called Shekinah Lakes, halfway between Nashville and Memphis.

Although I wanted to leave the city, I was reluctant to move to a country setting. I'm an extrovert, a social butterfly by nature, and I couldn't visualize myself having just deer and geese to talk to. (Actually, there are some human neighbors in the mix, but not many.) But I soon grew to appreciate living in God's nature, where I can watch Canada geese, a large white goose that controls the waterways, and a blue heron floating around the lake without a care in the world. Also, a variety of birds in the tree near our porch sing melodious and inspiring sounds like a choir.

After months of house renovations inside and outside, including the large porch Richard built, life began to feel more like home. But then unexpected calamities started to happen.

CALAMITY ONE

The first calamity emerged when we experienced low water pressure in the sinks and constant gurgling sounds in the toilets. They were trying to tell us something loud and clear for a full 10 days. But when a new water pump was installed, that took care of all the strange sounds. Hurrah!

We were so grateful for answered prayer that we lifted our hearts to God in gratitude and read Philippians 4:6, as it spoke to our hearts: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (NIV).

CALAMITY TWO

A week later a second calamity showed up. "Oh, Lord, I think you have the wrong address!" I said. "Surely not another unexpected calamity!"

Unexpected calamities started to happen.

I was busy playing songs on my keyboard when I felt a chill in the room. I reached for the natural gas fireplace remote and turned it on. After a while the room felt too hot so I proceeded to turn it off, but I noticed that the pilot light had gone off on its own.

Richard did all he could to try to restart it, but finally he had to call a gas expert to inspect the fireplace. The expert found that the valve was broken. Broken? We'd had this new fireplace for only six months. Finally we called the manufacturer, and after hearing the problem, they advised us to send the inside part of the fireplace to them. They received it and are working on it.

We'd actually had three fireplaces before this one, all of which broke down for one reason or another. At this point I quickly walked to my Bible with tensed fingers and flipped pages to find my second calamity Bible verse in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it" (NIV).

Reading this Bible verse had a calming effect on me. I trusted that one day our fireplace would find a cozy spot in our living room and heart.

CALAMITY THREE

The very next week we noticed that our kitchen and bathroom sinks were gurgling, but not the toilets as in the previous calamity. When we flushed the toilets, though, the water would rise up and almost overflow. I said, "This surely is not a good sign!"


Then there was the shower. As I opened up the faucet to take a shower after sudsing myself, I got just a dribble of water dripping down the shower wall and not on me. At that point I didn't want to waste a dribble! We came to the conclusion that calamity three must be caused by our septic tank. So we called a septic tank expert.

Out came the expert to investigate what the cause could be. The previous owner had told my husband that the septic tank was located in the middle of the property. So Richard and the expert went looking in that spot and found out there was no septic tank located there. Onward they marched and searched. Finally, after 20 minutes, they found the septic tank. It felt like they had struck gold at last!

But the septic tank was in the most unlikely place. It was under our driveway! After much digging, they cleaned out the septic tank. The expert said, "Remember, this is only a temporary fix." It's a miracle that the Lord protected our car and other visitors' cars from falling into the septic tank! The expert was shocked there were no calamities of that nature.

Well, they say it comes in threes, and we experienced all of them. The worst part is that the pipes connected to the septic tank are on someone else's property.

When the shock from this last calamity wore off, I felt like jumping up and down in anger. But instead I ran to my Bible, my only source of sanity and hope. My third calamity Bible verse is found in Matthew 6:20, 21: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The lesson I am learning through all of these calamities is that God doesn't want any of His children to become too comfortable in their country home or any home on earth. I'm glad to know there will be no septic tanks in heaven! 

Elisabeth Parent is a retired minister's wife. She is author of Learning to Be Someone.



LISTEN UP

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT skills we can acquire is expert listening. This may sound like an easy task since most of us have ears and the ability to hear. But just as knowing words and spelling does not make a good reader or writer, solely being able to hear does not make a good listener. Like reading and writing, it takes practice to listen and be a good listener.

Paul T. Rankin, former supervising director of research and adjustment for the Detroit public schools, measured the time people spend on four communication processes. He found that the average person spends 9 percent of their time writing, 16 percent reading, 30 percent speaking, and almost half, 45 percent, listening.

If nearly half of our time is spent listening, having the proper skills to listen and extract meaning from words spoken is essential to good communication and life in general. The dictionary definition of listening is “giving attention to a sound.” It is not merely hearing a sound but giving it your attention to dissect and understand.

TOP TIPS


Improving our listening skills helps us with not only our physical relationships but also our spiritual relationship with Christ. “To answer before listening—that is folly and shame” (Proverbs 18:13, NIV). There is a consistent theme in Scripture about hearing and listening for the voice of God and the Holy Spirit. Check out John 10:27, 28: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand” (NIV).



Here are five tips to become a better listener in your everyday life.

1. **Listen without an agenda.** Often while engaged in conversation, individuals are looking for the best spot to speak themselves. However, this leads to a diminished reception of the words actually being spoken. Listen fully and openly, not necessarily to respond but to understand. Should a natural response occur, great. But always listen to understand, not to respond.
2. **Restate in your own words what was said.** Restating or summarizing what you heard helps secure the thought in your mind. Repeating in a casual manner also lets the speaker know you are actively listening.
3. **Identify the emotion of the conversation.** Knowing the emotion behind the words helps secure context and understanding of the conversation. This allows the listener to create the right mental environment to understand the message. Psychologist Robert Plutchik emphasizes identifying emotions in conversation as a major part of emotional literacy.
4. **Listen without judgment.** Many times, especially when discussing difficult topics, it is easy to jump to judgment. As hard as it may be, fully listening to understand means listening without the intent to judge. This can help the listener and the speaker form a better connection.

5. **Don't "should" on people.** Using "should" in conversations sounds like judgments and accusations of something a person is not doing. Instead, use "I" statements when trying to convey a point. Instead of saying "You should drink more water," you can say, "I try to drink eight glasses of water every day."

Listening, like anything else you are trying to improve, takes time and practice. Don't be hard on yourself if you find yourself retreating to old listening habits. Pick one or two of these tips at a time to incorporate into your daily conversations and see the difference. 

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LOVE YOUR HEART

SCAN FOR AUDIO



HE HAD JUST A FEW minutes to swing by the hospital and visit a sick church member. Driving into the multistory parking garage, he was surprised to see that level after level revealed no empty parking spaces. As he entered Level 4, he saw a few open spots and headed for the nearest one.

Exiting his vehicle, he began walking toward the stairway when he heard it—a sound like a groan coming from a pickup truck parked nearby. He noticed the vehicle was not parked correctly. As he continued walking, he heard the sound again and turned around. He decided to check to see whether an animal in the truck might be in distress. What he found was a woman lying across the seat trying to reach her phone, which had fallen to the floor.

“Are you all right?” he asked.

“No,” she responded instantly. “I’m having a heart attack.”

Startled into action, he immediately replied, “Don’t move! Stay right here. I’m going for help.”

He sped off down four flights of stairs and burst into the emergency room. Two nurses sprang to their feet and joined him in dashing back up the flights of steps. The suffering woman had exited the truck and was now crouched against a wall, moaning with severe chest pain. After quickly

assessing the situation, the nurses called for transport help. Within minutes the patient was inside the hospital receiving treatment by the emergency room medical staff.

TIME IS MUSCLE

Complaint of crushing chest pain, as in this true story, is strong evidence of a heart-related medical emergency. However, symptoms of a heart attack don’t always present in such an obvious manner.

The heart itself does not have pain receptors. That means when it is in acute distress, effects can radiate as pain and discomfort to areas of the upper body. These can include not only mid-chest pain and pressure but also an ache or pain in either arm, the jaw, the neck, or the upper back. Additional symptoms can include shortness of breath, sweating, heartburn, nausea, vomiting, sleep disturbances, and, in an unusual case, persistent hiccups, which was the only presenting symptom by the patient in that unique situation.

Your heart is a pumper of blood, expanding and contracting automatically about 100,000 times a day. It provides life-sustaining oxygen-rich blood and nutrients throughout the body. However, the heart itself depends entirely on its own unique network of arteries, called coronary

“Keep your heart with all diligence and God will take care of the universe.”—Aiden Wilson Tozer

arteries, to provide the oxygen and nutrients it needs to keep its tissues and muscles alive and beating.

When blood flow is compromised by plaque blockage or injury to any of the coronary arteries, the area of heart muscle affected begins to deteriorate and die very quickly. “Time is muscle” is interpreted to mean minutes count in the need of restored arterial blood flow to stop this life-threatening process. The woman in the pickup wasted valuable treatment time by driving herself to the hospital and then having to deal with searching for a parking space.

OF HEARTS AND FLOWERS

Our hearts are essential to the life and well-being of our physical bodies, but there is more to the story of our amazing heart. The heart is also perceived as the center of our deep feelings and emotions. How many of us have not felt a quickening of our heartbeat when receiving a hug or special gift from a loved one? Or what about feelings of heaviness or painful pause upon hearing bad news?

Our brains take in and identify the information we receive through our senses—eyes, ears, nose, taste, and touch—and our hearts respond to the correlating emotions. Made in the image of God, we are blessed with the ability to experience emotions. Our God is an emotional God as demonstrated in these few (of many) Bible references:

1. He is a God who loves (1 John 4:8; John 3:16).
2. He longs after His children (Matthew 23:37).
3. He laughs (Psalm 2:4).
4. He experiences sorrow (Isaiah 53:3).
5. He feels compassion and sympathy (Matthew 9:36).

God’s emotions are always perfect, pure, timely, and purpose-driven, whereas ours are deeply compromised and woefully unreliable because of our sinful imperfections.

GUARD IT CAREFULLY

Proverbs 4:23 instructs us to guard our heart, “for out of it is the wellspring of life” (World English Bible). *Wellspring* can be translated as “a source of continuing supply.”

Protecting the workings of your heart against the risk of dangerous heart disease is easier than you think. Careful food choices, regular exercise, and adequate sleep can become healthful lifestyle habits that your heart will love. Vigilance is also necessary in maintaining a healthy weight and keeping blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels under control. Staying on track is the hard part, but we have promise of support and help from our faithful God. “My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:26).

In caring for our feelings and emotions, we are in urgent need of divine help. We can give our whole beings to God, who has promised the help of His Spirit to lead, guide, teach, and comfort our tender, needy hearts.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10, NIV). 7

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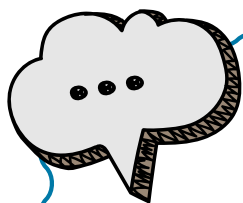
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Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years.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



FROM LONELY TO LOVED

IT'S NORMAL TO FEEL LONELY at times. When we do, it's a reminder to look out for other lonely people and make friends with them. Jesus felt very alone when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane just before He died. Adam felt lonely after he named all the pairs of animals. Elijah felt lonely when he ran to the mountains. David felt lonely and wrote a song about it. And Naomi felt lonely when her husband and sons died.



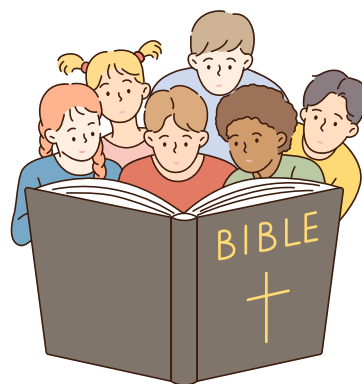
TALK ABOUT LONELINESS

Discuss these questions with your family:

- When do you feel most lonely?
- What do you do to help you feel less lonely?
- What have other people done that helped you feel less lonely?
- Guess when the person to your left is most likely to feel lonely. And then guess what they would like others to do for them when they feel all alone.

We might even feel lonely when we have our loving family and friends all around us. We can't always guess how other people are feeling. What could you do to let one another know when you're feeling lonely? And what would you most like people to do to help you feel less alone?

GOD
NEVER
LEAVES
YOU



God loves you so much that He never leaves your side! Read these Bible verses: Psalm 139:1-3, 7; Psalm 145:18; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 28:20; John 14:16, 17; Romans 8:38, 39; Ephesians 3:14-19; Hebrews 13:5. Can you find other Bible verses that tell us that God always loves us and will never leave us?

Choose your favorite Bible verse about God being with you. Make something that will always remind you of His loving presence. It might be a key ring or a tag for your schoolbag or a little poster for your room.

JESUS NOTICED LONELY PEOPLE

Jesus was always looking out for lonely people. His heart was filled with love for them, and He wanted them to know how much they were loved by God. Read the stories of Jesus to find 10 people who might have felt lonely before they met Jesus. Then describe how Jesus made friends with them and showed them His love. Can you find more than 10? Keep looking and learning about the ways Jesus noticed and loved lonely people, such as lepers, widows, children, and people from other countries.



LONELY PERSON	WHAT JESUS DID TO SHOW THEM THEY WERE LOVED AND PRECIOUS
1. Zacchaeus	Invited Himself for dinner
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



LONELY TO LOVED

Choose one of your favorite stories about Jesus from the last activity. Imagine you are one of the lonely people in the story. Write a story about meeting Jesus and feeling His love. Or draw pictures of the person in the story before and after they met Jesus.





From Lonely To Loved

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Paul describes lots of things we can do for others so we feel loved by God and by each other. Look up these verses in the New International Bible to discover what you and your family can do to help others feel less lonely.



VERSE	ACTION	3 THINGS YOU CAN DO
1 Thessalonians 5:11	Encourage them by cheering them on toward their goals.	Send them an encouraging message. Tell them you are praying for them. Cheer them on—support their team!
2 Corinthians 1:3, 4	C _____ them when they are sad.	
Romans 15:7	A _____ them by being their friend when others reject them.	
Romans 12:10	H _____ them and learn how to show them respect.	
Galatians 6:2	C _____ b _____ and help them when they are struggling.	
Romans 12:13	S _____ your things with them when they don't have enough.	
Romans 12:13	Be h _____ and invite them to your home.	
Philippians 2:3, 4	Show i _____ in them and their lives by listening to them.	



YOU'RE WELCOME

Have you ever visited a church for the first time and felt shy and lonely? Why not start a welcome ministry for the new children in your local church? In some churches some of the older children take turns welcoming all the other children coming to church. They smile, greet them, and tell them they are welcome! Some churches give little welcome bags to visiting children. These might have a Bible storybook, a Bible puzzle book, crayons, a button/badge, a welcome card, and perhaps a guide to the service in your church in child-friendly language. Some also include healthy juice and crackers. Perhaps you could encourage your church to start a special ministry to children like this. Maybe you and your family could prepare the welcome bags.



ALWAYS INVITED

Have you ever felt sad and lonely because you weren't invited to a party? What was that like? Read John 14:1-3. Jesus has gone to prepare a place and a party in heaven for all His friends. Jesus loves you, and He doesn't want you to miss out on being with Him forever! Design and write an invitation to yourself from Jesus to remind you that you're always invited to His party. And it will be the best party ever!



LONELINESS PROJECT

Work with your family to create a special mission/care project for people who might be lonely. Prayerfully think about what you could do to welcome and encourage some of the lonely people in your school, church, street, or community. Jesus reached out to lonely mothers, children, sick people, foreigners, hungry people, and disabled people. You could write prayer letters to them, visit them with food, invite them to your home, ask them to join you on a picnic, go to the park with them, or listen to them. Whenever you do something kind for a lonely person, you are also doing something kind for Jesus (Matthew 25:40).

Karen Holford is very shy, and she often felt lonely when she was younger. When she learned to look for other lonely people and do kind things for them, she made lots of interesting friends!

Southern Asia Division

The division held training programs and councils during the end of 2022. The following is a brief report.



Shepherdesses met in North Andhra Section.



A Shepherdess training program was held in South Andhra Section.



A Shepherdess council was held in Guntur Section.



A Shepherdess council occurred in East Telangana Section.



A one-day Shepherdess seminar was held in South-Central India Union in Bangalore.



John Victor, president of Southern Asia Division, conducted an evangelistic series in Guntur Section, and his wife, Krupa Victor, sang for special music.

SHEPHERDESS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Pastors' spouses led Shepherdess International Day in their churches. They involved their members in leading song service, conducting Sabbath School programs, presenting special songs, and taking part in mission reports, feature talks, health messages, quiz competitions, and the divine service.



In many churches, members honor the Shepherdesses and show love and gratitude to them by giving shawls, beautiful flowers, and gifts as a token of love. The Southern Asia Division sent some sarees for the Shepherdesses who are working very hard in the church.



Christmas gifts were also distributed in all the sections. The real ministry is in helping the poor and making them happy.



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10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

PRIORITIES OF FAITH

January 10-20, 2024

"He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?"

MICAH 6:8, ESV

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