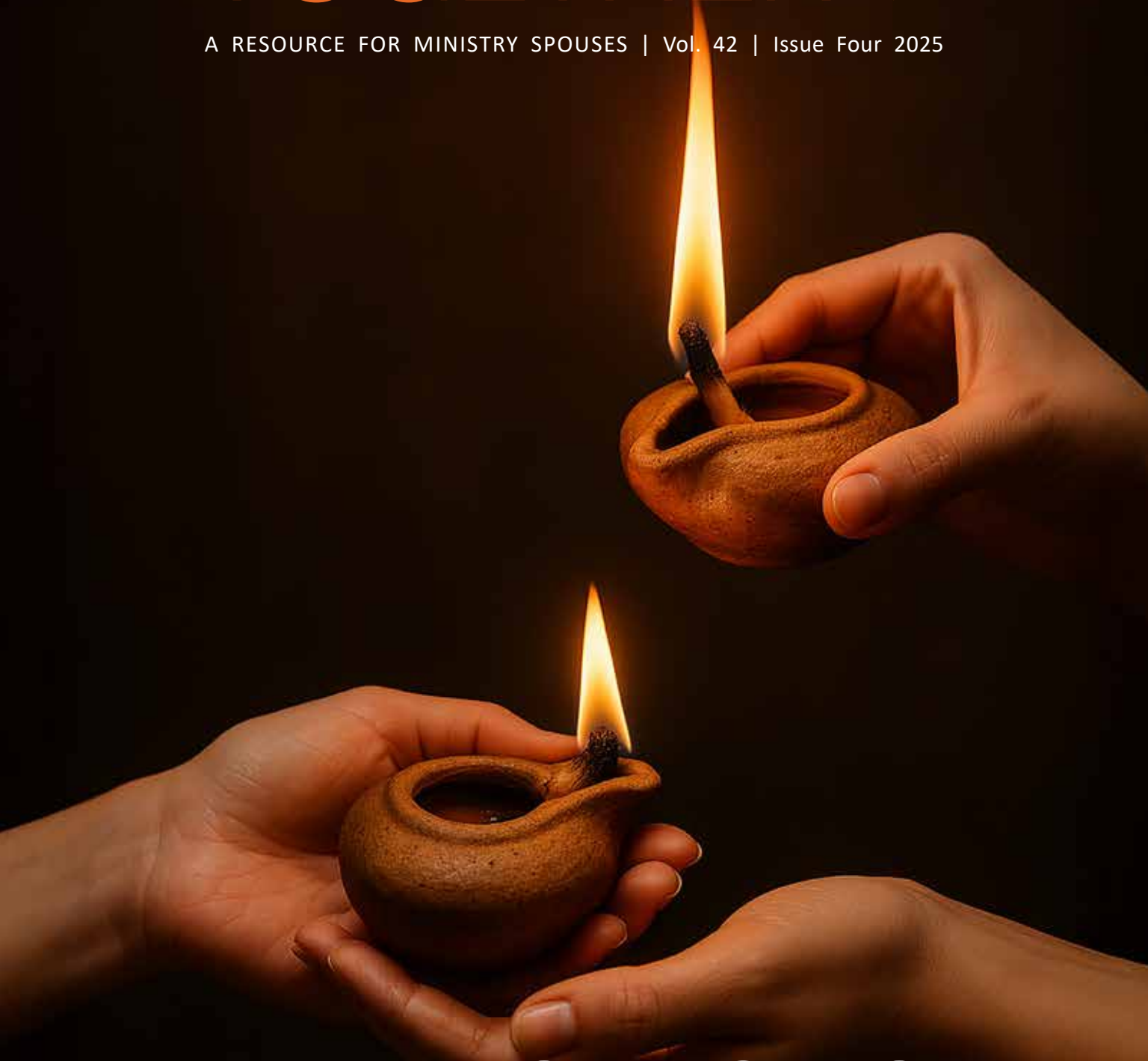


STRONGER TOGETHER

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES | Vol. 42 | Issue Four 2025



TRANSITIONS



STRONGER TOGETHER

Issue 4
2025



ON THE COVER

Like dark clouds gathering on the horizon, change can feel ominous. The future might bring lightning strikes, damaging hail, or a refreshing rain to water our plants—literally and metaphorically. Change is guaranteed. We can dread it, or we can prepare for it and embrace it. This issue addresses various aspects of transition and shares tips that help us not only navigate change but also nourish and grow a legacy of love and faithfulness with grace.



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PASSING THE TORCH

A SACRED MANDATE FOR MINISTERIAL SPOUSES

ONE OF THE MOST VITAL responsibilities within the church family is preparing the next generation to carry forward the Lord's work. For ministerial spouses, this is not merely a matter of planning for the future; it is a spiritual duty deeply rooted in the legacy of faith. Our influence does not end when we step away from active roles; it continues as we pass the torch to those whom God is raising.

In his final counsel to Timothy, the apostle Paul focused not on self-preservation but on the enduring work of the gospel. He writes with urgency and tenderness, seeking to pass the torch to the next faithful laborer.

Commenting on this, Ellen White wrote, "Fearing that Timothy's mild, yielding disposition might lead him to shun an essential part of his work, Paul exhorted him to be faithful in reproving sin and even to rebuke with sharpness those who were guilty of gross evils. Yet he was to do this 'with all long-suffering and doctrine.' He was to reveal the patience and love of Christ" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 503).

Your life, your prayers, your character—these are the torches you pass on.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

Older workers should educate younger workers to bear responsibilities.

Paul urged Timothy to remain faithful and steadfast, to be wary of the false teachers who would attempt to lead him astray, and to remember that persecution is destined to come to all who strive to live godly lives in Christ Jesus.

For us as ministerial spouses, this moment between Paul and Timothy offers a clear lesson: the ministry must continue through intentional mentorship, spiritual nurturing, and the courageous passing of the torch.

A TORCH RECEIVED IN HUMILITY

I remember when I began in ministry. I was young and eager, yet completely unsure of my role as a pastor's spouse. I had no training, no experience, and honestly, no idea what was expected of me. But God, in His mercy, placed a mentor in my life: Freya, the pastor's wife of my home church.

Freya took the time to sit with me. We didn't have many sessions, but the few we had were life-changing. She told me something that has stayed with me through every season of ministry: "Stay connected to God. He truly cares for you."

She warned me about the dangers of gossip and encouraged me to pray with church members instead. She reminded me that God called me to be a **spiritual leader** and **constant support to my husband** in the Lord's work.

Freya didn't just teach me—she **modeled it**. I always saw her in the front row, faithfully playing the piano and leading the music service with great skill and grace. She was the quiet strength of the church, a woman of conviction and beauty inside and out. To this day, though she is older, she continues to **inspire me** to do what is best for God.

Her example was the torch handed to me. And now, I pray that I may be the same kind of mentor to someone else.

THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

Paul warned that in the last days, perilous times would come (2 Timothy 3:1–5). His message was urgent. His counsel to Timothy was clear: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season. . . . discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2, 5).


This call extends to us today. Our role as ministerial spouses is not simply to accompany our husbands; it is to help carry the spiritual weight of the ministry. To uplift, to intercede, to serve, and most importantly, to prepare the next generation.

Ellen White affirmed this when she wrote: "The inexperienced ones should not be sent out alone. They should stand right by the side of older and experienced ministers, where they could educate them" (*Evangelism*, p. 684).

Older workers should educate younger workers to bear responsibilities. Let them counsel with these younger laborers and let them gradually transfer all the burden upon them.

THE LEGACY WE LEAVE

Your life, your prayers, your character—these are the torches you pass on. Perhaps God is calling you to be someone's Freya. You may not realize how powerful your presence and encouragement can be in shaping the future of another young spouse who feels unprepared and uncertain.

Let us not withhold what God has taught us. Let us be willing to pour ourselves out for others. Let us live in such a way that when it is time to pass the torch, it is done with grace, wisdom, and the assurance that the light will continue to burn brightly. May each of us be found faithful in both carrying the torch and passing it on—with love, with purpose, and with unwavering trust in our God who never fails across generations. 

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



Special Quotes

by Ellen G. White

It is in the order of God that those who bear responsibilities should often meet together to counsel with one another, and to pray earnestly for that wisdom which He alone can impart. Talk less; much precious time is lost in talk that brings no light. Let church leaders unite in fasting and prayer for the wisdom that God has promised to supply liberally. Make known your troubles to God. Tell Him, as did Moses, "I cannot lead this people unless Thy presence shall go with me." And then ask still more; pray with Moses, "Shew me thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). What is this glory? The character of God. This is what He proclaimed to Moses.

To Be Like Jesus, p. 104

Nothing is of greater importance than the education of our children and young people. The church should arouse and manifest a deep interest in this work; for now as never before, Satan and his host are determined to enlist the youth under the black banner that leads to ruin and death.

Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 165

I hope that none of those who have been long in the work will think that because they are growing old, they are incapacitated for service. I hope that they will stand up to bear their message as long as they have the evidence that the Lord is helping them. . . . [L]et no aged worker, although he is old and gray, think that he is released from service. Let the work be carried on in simplicity. Surely we have the Lord on whom to depend.

The Retirement Years, p. 31

There has been altogether too little attention paid to our children and youth, and they have failed to develop as they should in the Christian life because the church members have not looked upon them with tenderness and sympathy, desiring that they might be advanced in the divine life.

Child Guidance, p. 488

We cannot think that any man, however great his ability and usefulness, is best serving God or the world while his time is given to other pursuits, to the neglect of his own children.

Pastoral Ministry, p. 88

In gaining a preparation for the ministry, young men should be associated with older ministers. Those who have gained an experience in active service are to take young, inexperienced workers with them into the harvest-field, teaching them how to labor successfully for the conversion of souls. Kindly and affectionately these older workers are to help the younger ones to prepare for the work to which the Lord may call them. And the young men in training should respect the counsel of their instructors, honoring their devotion, and remembering that their years of labor have given them wisdom.

Evangelism, p. 683

Let us always encourage young men and young women to make the most of their capabilities, to improve their talents to the utmost, remembering the words, "Let no man despise thy youth." We do not expect that they will never err in word or action, but if they will heed the reproofs of the Lord, and correct every mistake, they will make advancement. . . . Let the older workers encourage the younger ones, never speaking lightly or disparagingly of them.

The Retirement Years, pp. 47, 48

SCAN FOR AUDIO

A photograph of two young girls of Asian descent. The girl on the left is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a small blue bird pattern and has her arms around the girl on the right. The girl on the right is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and has her hair in a ponytail. They are both smiling warmly at the camera.

RAISING COMPASSIONATE CHILDREN

MAKE KINDNESS A WAY OF LIFE

I WAS JUST THREE YEARS OLD when I discovered the joy of serving others. My father was working at the mission hospital in the Kwahu region of Ghana. Every day, I saw the line of sick and injured people outside the clinic, and every day, I saw the joy on people's faces when their wounds were cleaned and bandaged, when they were handed a bottle of medicine, or when they lay resting in a comfortable bed after urgent surgery.

When we returned to England, I watched my parents quietly caring for struggling families and refugees. I realized that helping others made my parents happy, and I also felt a glow in my heart when I saw the gratitude of those they helped. Later, my dad worked for ADRA, driving trucks of food into war zones. One day my mom packed a box with party food, gift bags, and dresses for two little girls who had never had a birthday party because of the war.

THE BLESSING OF COMPASSION

I recently learned how the brain responds when we relieve the suffering of others. When we empathize with people and sense their distress, the pain networks in our brain are stimulated, and we feel sad too. But when their pain inspires us to respond with compassion and alleviate their suffering, the pleasure

and reward networks in our brains are activated. We feel peace, gratitude, and joy. Amazing! God has wired our brains to be rewarded for blessing others! Helping others is one of the best ways to experience joy and overcome the sadness and distress in our own lives. When we help children feel the joy of helping others, we give them a gift that will bless them and others for a lifetime.

COMPASSIONATE GOD

God is compassionate (Psalm 103:8). His compassionate love for all His children is the motivation behind His desire to save us and to prepare a home where we can live with Him forever (John 14:1–3). Jesus was compassionate to others (Matthew 14:13–21). His compassion moved Him to heal, help, forgive, and encourage people, as well as to feed the multitudes who came to hear His teachings. God shows His loving compassion for us in thousands of ways every day. When we recognize His care in our lives, it fills our hearts so we can show care for others (1 John 4:19).

SMALL THINGS, BIG DIFFERENCE

Even small acts of compassion can make a huge difference to someone who is suffering. Researchers discovered that when doctors expressed compassion in a 45-second message, their patients experienced many health benefits—and these positive effects lasted for months. They told the patients that they did not know how their illness would progress, but they promised to be with them every step of the way, to support and help them.

*God has
wired our
brains to be
rewarded
for blessing
others!*



A smile, a listening ear, a comforting hug, a gentle touch, a tiny gift, a thoughtful action, or an encouraging message may take very little time. Still, these gestures can bring hope, peace, joy, love, and gratitude to others, which the Holy Spirit can expand in their lives and ripple out into their community.

Think about a time when people showed you compassion and relieved your suffering. What effect did it have on you? How do you feel when you remember the moment of kindness? When my family experienced a tragedy, someone left a tiny bunch of flowers on our doorstep. The memory of that small action brings me joy every time I think of it, and I thank God for the neighbor who took a few minutes to gather the flowers for us.

*Every child is unique.
Help them discover
their special ways to
help others so they
can experience joy.*

EXPLORING COMPASSION

Use the story of the Good Samaritan to help your children learn about compassion (Luke 10:25–37). The Good Samaritan believed it was important to help those who were suffering, regardless of their nationality or social status. He used what he had available to treat the man's wounds and to take him to safety. He acted quickly and generously. The Good Samaritan needed to travel farther but knew the injured man needed to rest and recover in comfort. So he paid the innkeeper to care for the man and promised to cover any extra expenses upon his return.

Explore this story together and learn the process the Good Samaritan used to help others so that your children understand their responsibility to be compassionate, to look for opportunities to help, to ask or notice how they can help, and then to act quickly—and find others who can help too.



COMPASSION GROWS AT HOME

Loving families nurture compassionate children who love to serve God and others. Look for ways that God is showing compassion for you and your family. Help your children experience God's compassion for them. Find ways to show comfort and compassion to your children when they are sad and struggling. Involve them in acts of compassion for your neighbors, friends, church members, and community. As you model compassion to your children, it will become more natural for them to show compassion to others. Encourage them to notice how being kind and compassionate helps them feel happier too.

IDENTIFY THEIR GIFTS


Help your children discover their spiritual gifts and talents. They may enjoy playing music, singing, drawing, cooking, or gardening. How can they use their simple skills to be a blessing to others? Their gifts don't need to be perfect. When I was a child, I wrote poems for people and made little cards. The poems were not amazing, and the cards were childish. But they made other people smile and feel loved because I had thought about them.

Every child is unique. Help them discover their special ways to help others so they can experience joy. Creative children might prefer to make a gift. Others will enjoy singing songs in care homes, visiting lonely neighbors, or helping you to make soup for homeless people. Affirm whatever they do to care for others. Your positive response will inspire them to keep trying.

ONE SIMPLE COMPASSION CONCEPT

Whenever Jesus met suffering people, He found a way to bless them with love and left them much happier than when He found them. This is a simple concept to help you, and your children, make compassion a way of life. You can practice this at home by aiming to leave each other feeling happier and blessed. And you can help your children bless others by thinking of kind things to do and say to everyone they meet at school, in church, and even in the grocery store.

COMPASSION SHARES GOD'S LOVE

Compassion is a powerful way to share God's love. It helps us become salt and light in our communities (Matthew 5:13–16) and bless others as the Good Samaritan blessed the injured man. The "sheep" in Jesus' parable noticed those in need and blessed them with kindness (Matthew 25:31–46). Whenever we show compassion to others, they will taste God's love and see that it is good (Psalm 34:8). 

Karen Holford works for the Trans-European Division and enjoys studying research on compassion, which affirms God's character and the biblical principles of caring for others.





FRIENDS— WE ALL NEED THEM

HOW TO HAVE THEM AND KEEP THEM

SCAN FOR AUDIO



As part of the “Advent movement,” it’s challenging to grow roots anywhere.

THE YOUNG WOMAN’S VOICE broke down. She was close to tears. “At the seminary they told us not to have any friends in our church. My husband manages well enough, because he has so much to do. But I feel so lonely and insecure . . .”

We were sitting on the floor in a circle around candles, a group of 30 ministers’ wives who had convened for a counseling seminar. Every evening, we gathered to discuss our personal needs and pains. The camaraderie we felt encouraged this young ministerial intern’s wife to confide her unfulfilled yearning for friendship.

Friends are more precious than gold and diamonds. God created human beings with the need to communicate with each other. Although pastors and their spouses are just as human as everyone else, I’ve often heard counsel that we should not have close friends in our local churches. It’s as if the pastoral couple is supposed to constantly give—give love, give time, give help, in various situations. When are we able to receive?

Of course, we can plug into the divine power plant, and that should be our prime effort every day. But I think God uses other means to give us strength as well, such as the influence of good friends. Time spent with friends makes us happier and healthier—healthier in a broader sense. And friends can help us when we have difficulties. They can offer constructive criticism that we might otherwise be unwilling to accept. Friends are often the only pastor a pastor has access to.

One conference president testified that at the beginning of their ministry he and his wife avoided close relationships with parishioners. At the seminary they had swallowed the pill called “no friends,” but they never found happiness in that mindset. Now, looking back, they are sure it was wrong. The wife could have done with a bit of help and friendship, having borne two babies within a year without grandparents nearby.

Naturally, it is not wise to favor some church members with friendship while neglecting others. We should be friendly with all parishioners, remembering that not all “friends” are trustworthy.

ACQUAINTANCES AND FRIENDS

Real friends are those you can disturb in the middle of the night if necessary and still find yourself welcome. Acquaintances and friends are not the same. At least in our “old” European countries, you don’t get too chummy with new acquaintances. A friendship will blossom when the circumstances are right. And when it does, it will bring forth fruit that has no harmful effect on others. So let’s not worry so much about the danger of having close friends in the church.



Moving means leaving our friends behind, but it also gives us the chance to make new friends.

Good friends will help us cope with all the rest of the church! We are often encouraged to find our friends among other pastors and their wives. And how wonderful it would be if colleagues could all be friends. Unfortunately, sometimes a neighboring peer is not quite a kindred spirit! Becoming vulnerable might be detrimental to one's career.

No, it is not easy to have friends among the pastoral corps. And even when the pastors manage to form a bond, what about their wives? As long as children are at home and in school, mothers are more or less bound to the turf even when ministerial spouse meetings are organized.

Another problem with befriending fellow ministers' families is that it takes time for a friendship to grow. We are so busy in our districts that it is sometimes impossible to enjoy fellowship with neighboring pastoral couples. And when a friendship finally forms, it's time to pack our cases and move on again. Sometimes we realized who our real friends were only when we moved away!

KEEPING IN TOUCH

As part of the "Advent movement," it's challenging to grow roots anywhere. But we have friends in many countries on various continents with whom we stay in touch through letters in different languages. Moving means leaving our friends behind, but it also gives us the chance to make new friends. And, thus, each time we move we eventually feel richer.

I remember how we used to wait for the mail when we served in Africa. Our nearest friends lived more than 500 miles away, which meant a 24-hour drive on treacherous roads. My husband often spent weeks on bush trips, leaving me alone with our children. The mail was my only contact with friends and family. It came once in a fortnight if some bus driver remembered to go and pick up the mailbag on his way out of the capital. No wonder I appreciated letters!



If we try to project an image of the perfect pastoral family, people might even be scared of us.



It isn't always easy to find time to write to friends. It takes effort to keep a friendship alive, whether you are close together or far away. And the rewards are worth the trouble.

JUST BE YOURSELF

I have often wondered why missionaries have an invisible bond of friendship, even if they don't know each other well. We recently hosted a missionary family for the weekend. My husband knew them, but I had never seen them before. Yet from the moment they entered our house, we were friends. Sharing common experiences may be the reason—participating in the joys and difficulties of a life that only another missionary can fully understand.

Why doesn't this camaraderie apply in the same way to other pastoral couples? They experience similar concerns and joys. The problem may be that we are so busy "playing a role" that we don't let people see us as we are, our normal selves.


Karen Burton Mains tells in her book *Open Heart, Open Home*¹ of a lady who came into her home at a moment when she was least prepared for visitors. The visitor looked around and remarked, "I used to think you were perfect, but now I think we can be friends."

I resist talking about the "role of a minister's spouse" because I don't want to play a role. I want to be myself. I like to reach out to others in my way, with my talents. If we try to project an image of the perfect pastoral family, people might even be scared of us. Let's have the courage to be normal people. Then we can reach out to others and give of our love naturally. When we give of our love, friendship will grow.

BLOSSOMING FRIENDSHIP

I like to think of friendship as a beautiful flower that spreads out the perfume of love and caring. This perfume will attract bees and butterflies. Don't worry about their robbing your nectar. At the same time they take from you, they also give you pollen that will fertilize your being. Friendship is, in many ways, a constant exchange of giving and taking, one of the most natural things in life.

Some people are more outgoing than others and find it easy to make friends. Others are shy and retiring and tend to watch life go by. I'm a shy person and have experienced the frustration of being in a crowd of people, knowing hardly anybody. I have learned not to withdraw, although this would be the easiest thing to do. There are always others who don't know everybody and feel lonely, so I go to someone and ask a few questions. At pastoral retreats, I approach the people who are new to our conference and try to make them feel at ease. They are usually glad to share their experiences, and the first steps toward friendship are taken.



*It takes effort
to keep a
friendship alive,
whether you are
close together
or far away.*

CHILDREN HELP MAKE FRIENDS

We have found that our four daughters have been a great help in communication. Sometimes I tell young ministerial couples, half in earnest, “The best way to make friends in your new church is either to have a new baby when you arrive or to expect one soon!” Children really are a big help in making friends. They always give something to talk about, even for a very shy person. Mothers are a species of their own, and once you belong to this category of people, communication is guaranteed.

Older children have their own friends, and often, contacts with the parents of your children’s friends develop into real friendships. Don’t be afraid of asking them to stay for supper even if you haven’t prepared anything. Spontaneous invitations are so much cozier! Nobody expects a five-course meal.

We used to live at the back of the church building. Our daughter Nadia would wait in front of the church on Sabbath mornings for the first people

to come. She could hardly wait for the arrival of her friends. What a welcome! At the end of a Sabbath day full of activities, the children were still reluctant to part. So we would invite the family to stay for supper and play games together. We had a lot of fun.

DOING THINGS TOGETHER

Another way to make friends is to do things together. Pastors who are continuously “on duty” will find it harder to make friends than those who take time off to share their leisure with others. Some say, “This is my day off, and that is family time.” Family time is great, but spending time with another family can also be the beginning of a lasting friendship. Pastors off duty are easier to make friends with.

Church retreats have a way of blending duty and leisure activities, allowing church members to see the pastoral family as ordinary people. Participating in sports or hobbies is a great way to make friends. The point is to be as normal as possible so others dare to be our friends.

My husband loves to go to my home country, Finland, for our holidays. One day, on a church outing, he told our church elder about our

plans for the summer holidays in Finland. My husband must have described Finland as a paradise on earth because, to my horror, the elder became interested in sharing our holiday in Finland! I don't enjoy playing the tour guide, so I wasn't enthusiastic about showing this elder and his family around the country. Nevertheless, we went to Finland with them and had a marvelous time. We became friends.

OTHER FRIENDS

A friend of mine from childhood recently sent me a copy of a document we both signed when we were 12 years old, promising to be friends "till death do us part." I had completely forgotten about it, but she had pasted it in her diary. And really, our friendship has lasted more than 30 years, even though we have lived far apart.


I believe some of our best friendships are the ones we make in childhood—my friend is as close as a sister. I can trust her with things I would tell no one else. We don't write letters all the time, and we don't see each other often, but when we do, it is as if we had never been separated. I encourage my children to stay in touch with their friends through letters and visits, helping them maintain friendships from their childhood.

Rather than focusing on "having friends," we should dedicate ourselves to "being friends."

Many pastors and their wives find it refreshing to have friends outside the church—and not just for the purpose of converting them. Could it be that the church forces us into a mold to which we are expected to conform, and thus the only place we can be normal people is outside the church? Neighbors can become good friends if we spend time with them. They may not directly encourage us in our ministry, but they will keep us in touch with the real world and will challenge us to keep our Christianity real.

FOCUS ON BEING A FRIEND

If we want friends, we should support and encourage those around us. Rather than focusing on "having friends," we should dedicate ourselves to "being friends." This is especially important in relating to colleagues in the clergy, where it seems difficult to find real friends. When we support and affirm our ministerial peers, holding their secrets in confidence, we establish lasting friendships with them.

Thank God He made us as He did, dependent on relationships that enrich our lives. Let's be open and honest with each other, and then we'll find rewarding relationships wherever we are. 

¹ Karen Burton Mains, *Open Heart, Open Home* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1987), p. 20.

Hannele Ottshofski was a pastor's wife in Mainz, Germany, when this article was published in Ministry Magazine in December 1992. Available at <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1992/12/friends-we-all-need-them>.





MEMBERSHIP OR DISCIPLESHIP?

WHAT YOU AIM FOR IS WHAT YOU GET

JESUS' AIM WAS TO MAKE disciples and not just believers. His approach was to work with a small group intensely. He modeled life and disciple-making to this small group. He taught the ways of God and faith. He corrected their failings and pointed them toward holiness. He instructed them in the processes of disciple-making. He asked questions to challenge their faulty thinking. Yes, He often talked to crowds, but He knew that on Sunday the masses could believe in Him as king and on Friday believe that He needed to be crucified.

A PROCESS, NOT AN EVENT


Discipleship is a lifelong journey. There may be significant events along the way, but unless discipleship is seen as a process and not an event, we will fail to make disciples who are "faithful to the end." Being mentored in good spiritual habits, developing the life of a steward, being trained in sharing faith—all form part of the discipleship journey.

MEMBER VERSUS DISCIPLE

Disciples will be members, but members may not be disciples. In the stories of Andrew and Phillip in John 1 and the Samaritan woman in John 4, we find two characteristics of disciples. They have met Jesus and have a story to tell, and they invite others to "come and see" Jesus.

ANYONE CAN DO IT!

A church leader's primary role is to equip God's people "for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12, NKJV). Such simple skills as Bible reading, sharing your testimony, and presenting the gospel enable many members, including new disciples, to become disciple-makers.

The evangelism approach we use will determine whether we make disciples or believers. If we aim to make disciples, we will have disciples, but if we aim to make believers, we may not have disciples. 

This article is excerpted from Discipling, Nurturing, and Reclaiming, a collection of papers addressing church member retention, available at: <https://www.gcsession.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Discipling-Nurturing-and-Reclaiming-Nurture-and-Retention-Summit.pdf>.

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If we aim to make disciples, we will have disciples, but if we aim to make believers, we may not have disciples.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

FROM THE TABLE TO TOMORROW

HOW PARENTS SHAPE LIFELONG DIETARY HABITS



SCAN FOR AUDIO



As stewards of their children's health, parents are called to teach and model behaviors that honor the body.

PARENTS PLAY A CRUCIAL role in shaping their children's dietary habits. As primary role models, parents influence their children's food choices with their own behaviors. By consistently setting a good example of healthy eating—especially the consumption of fruits and vegetables—parents help establish patterns that promote long-term health.^{2,4}

WHERE HEALTHY HABITS BEGIN

The foundation of good health begins at home. Parents serve not only as caregivers but also as educators and role models of healthful living. Children's habits and character are strongly shaped by what they observe at home, especially during their formative years. Ellen White stated that parents should be examples to their children in habits of living, not only teaching but practicing the principles of health (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 385). By establishing these parental responsibilities, she highlights the necessity for parents

to instruct their children on healthy dietary practices and consistently embody these principles daily, thereby reinforcing the lessons they impart.


Research supports this principle. Children are more likely to adopt healthy eating behaviors when their parents model them.² When parents consistently include fruits and vegetables in their own diets—especially during their children's formative years—children are more likely to develop a preference for these healthy foods, which also lowers the risk of obesity and related health issues.³ Furthermore, the influence of parents extends beyond the home environment; children who see their parents making healthy food choices in public settings, such as restaurants, are more likely to emulate these behaviors.^{2,3}



PRACTICAL STEPS FOR PARENTS

To foster healthy eating in children, parents can take the following practical actions:

- **Lead by example:** Children are keen observers and often imitate what they see. Consistently choose fruits and vegetables over less healthy options to send a powerful message to your children about the importance of nutritious eating.
- **Make nutritious foods appealing:** Meals should be simple, wholesome, and attractively presented to encourage children to develop a taste for healthy foods.
- **Involve children in meal preparation:** Engaging kids in selecting and preparing meals increases their willingness to eat nutritious foods.¹
- **Create a healthy food environment:** Making fruits and vegetables accessible at home encourages more nutritious choices.¹ Stock the kitchen with a variety of fresh produce.
- **Introduce changes gradually:** Ellen White advised meeting people where they are. This certainly includes a gentle, positive transition to healthier eating (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 198).

Parents play a crucial role in forming their children's eating habits. Setting a good example by consuming fruits and vegetables is an effective way to promote healthy eating. Biblical teachings support the idea that caring for the body, including making healthy food choices, is a responsibility entrusted to parents. By modeling healthy behaviors, involving children in meal preparation, and making nutritious foods accessible, parents can instill lifelong habits that contribute to their children's overall well-being. As Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, the habits established in childhood have a lifelong impact, making it vital for parents to lead by example. 

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Shondell De Velde, PhD, is a social science and health educator in the North Bahamas Conference. She loves to talk about nutrition.

MARRIED TO A PASTOR?

Discover a safe place to fellowship, ask questions, and learn from others on social media!

DISCUSS

SHARE

CONNECT

Official groups for ministry spouses online:



ministerialspouses



@ministrysposuses



@gc_ministerial_spouses



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/esposasministeriales/>





GUIDING AND PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

HELP THEM GROW INTO WISE LEADERS



SCAN FOR AUDIO

SINCE THE TIME GOD called His people out of Egypt, He has instructed us to pass our faith to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6). Proverbs 22:6 encourages us to train children in the right way so they will not turn from the truth when they are older. This Scripture is crucial for guiding parents and church leaders in spiritual mentorship. Are we inspiring the next generation to lead? What does passing the torch mean? How do we pass on our faith? How can we encourage young people?

POINT CHILDREN TO JESUS

We need to guide the next generation toward Jesus, emphasizing His love and relationship with us over rules, religion, or rites. We achieve this through Adventist schools, weekly Sabbath School classes, and Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs.

TEACH CHILDREN BIBLE PROMISES

By encouraging our children to memorize Bible verses, we help them internalize the promises of Scripture. We teach them to apply these promises in their everyday lives, guiding them to make lifestyle choices and decisions based on biblical principles rather than worldly values. Through our actions, we model how to live and make choices in the ways of Jesus, serving as a living example for our children to follow.

HELP CHILDREN MAKE WISE DECISIONS

King Solomon said: “I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble” (Proverbs 4:11, 12).

It is important to recognize that, because of technological advances, children today encounter challenges, pressures, problems, and temptations that previous generations did not face. As they grow older and cultural changes continue, these issues will likely increase.

We need to guide the next generation toward Jesus, emphasizing His love and relationship with us over rules, religion, or rites.

Although it is impossible to fully prepare children for experiences that we have not had ourselves, we can prepare the way by modeling spiritual practices and giving them the tools they need to make wise choices. Regardless of the situations they encounter, we need to be present and supportive in their lives, showing them the love of Jesus through us.

EMPOWER CHILDREN AS LEADERS

For generations, the church has dedicated its time, attention, and resources to preparing the next generation. Young individuals have been trained in leadership and empowered to take on roles of responsibility and decision-making.

We can serve as mentors to inspire the next generation to become leaders. Providing opportunities for young people to lead in Sabbath School, Adventurers and Pathfinders, youth groups, and even on the church board is essential.


Additionally, we can help young people discover their calling in ministry and leadership by offering them opportunities to tell stories, sing, preach, or assist with the sound system—wherever their interests lie.

UTILITZE YOUR RESOURCES

Growing a generation of future leaders requires today's leaders to be willing to give children and youth opportunities to learn. And it takes resources to help leaders understand how to prepare the next generation.

The church has developed many resources to train our children to become leaders. Some examples of these resources include Sabbath School Leader's Guides, Adventurer and Pathfinder staff resources, and Adventist education resources. Do your research and involve youth wherever you can in your church!

- GC Children's Ministry: <https://children.adventist.org/resources>
- Adventist Youth Ministries: <https://www.gc youthministries.org/>
- Children's Ministries: <https://www.nadadventist.org/departments/childrens-ministries>
- Youth and Young Adult Ministries: <https://www.nadadventist.org/departments/youth-young-adult-ministries>

It is my prayer that we will continue to pray for wisdom and the skills to lead His young people. It is also my prayer that we will partner with the Holy Spirit, asking to be used in a mighty way to protect and love the youth He has placed in our lives. 

Angelina Wood has served in many ministries over the past 41 years, including as an educator, administrator, and conference department director. She and her husband currently serve in various roles in the North American Division. She enjoys reading, hosting gatherings, gardening, and adventuring with her husband.



WHEN YOUR SPOUSE IS CALLED, ARE YOU CALLED TOO?



SCAN FOR AUDIO

DISCERNING GOD'S CALLING FOR YOU

I CAN'T REMEMBER THE EXACT moment my husband shared his thoughts with me. Maybe it was on a weekend as we were enjoying some relaxing time at home, or perhaps it was pillow talk. What I do remember was him saying, "I've been reading the book *The Four Chaplains*, and I've been thinking about military chaplaincy."

My whole body revolted in protest. At first, I dismissed his words with a sarcastic comment. "You're crazy! Those aren't our plans for our family." However, he did not stop talking about the idea.

All marriages go through difficult times, but I believed this was a declaration of war for me. I was determined not to give in. I threatened separation and divorce. I used shaming tactics, guilt trips, and manipulation. I was in a very dark place. I remember crying in my closet many nights, screaming in my mind to God to stop this! I didn't want the loneliness, the sacrifice, the unknown, and the uncontrollable future.

I wrote to one of my mentors who knew my marriage intimately. I was hoping she would take my side. This is what she said to me:



“You have this wonderful opportunity to trust God in new and meaningful ways. It is not wise to make this a bone of contention between the two of you. You cannot ask him not to pursue his call to manage your anxiety. God is more than able to care for you and your needs should something happen to him.

“It’s time to wrestle with God about this decision and how you can support him, not control him. It’s also time to decide to do nothing to break your relationship with him, like threatening separation and divorce. God is calling you to a deeper, more meaningful experience with Him. The anxiety you feel needs to be addressed because it’s larger than your husband’s decision.”

I stood there, dumbfounded by her words. Many questions came to my mind. How deep was my faith? Where were my fears coming from? Was God calling me too?


I had married a pastor, and it seemed very natural to me when he then decided to be a hospital chaplain. That was a very comfortable transition. This was different. I had vowed never to marry anybody in the military. I had a strong prejudice against that kind of lifestyle. After I read that email, I knew what I had to do.

I had to surrender and trust God. I thought, *But I have already done that in other things. Why is this going to another level again? Does God really know best?* I had to admit that God is constantly trimming me, molding me, and polishing me.

Maybe as you read this, you are battling with the pastor’s call, chaplain’s call, military call, or another calling altogether. You are not alone.

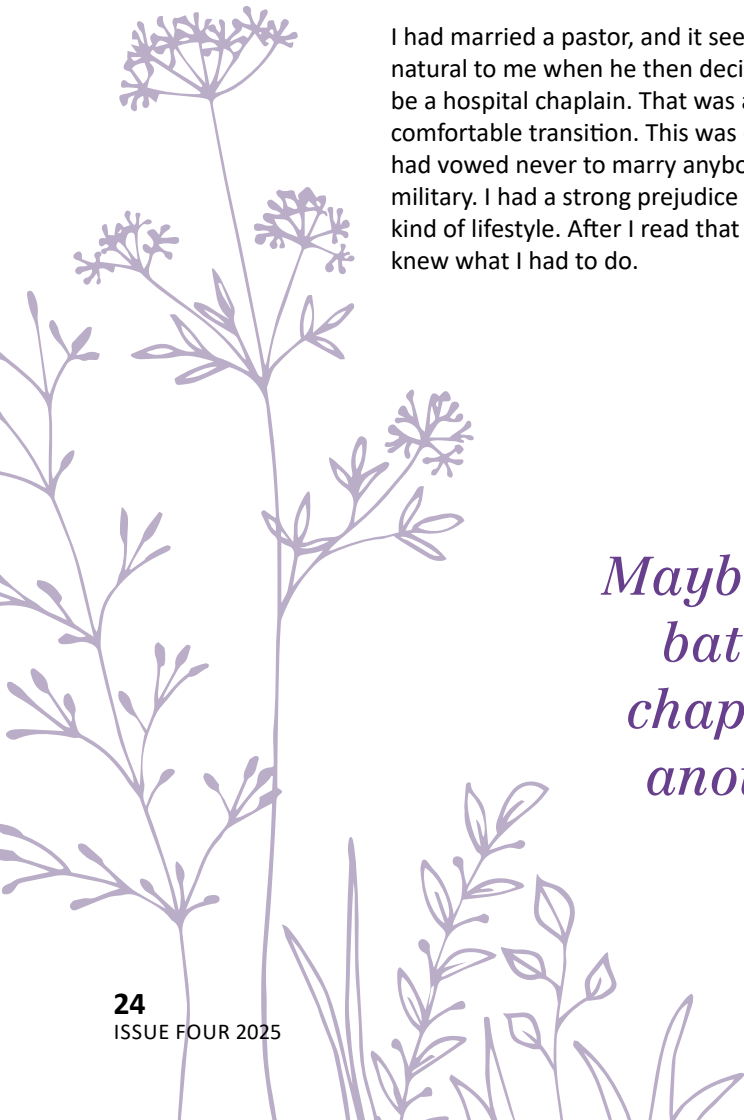
Deuteronomy 31:8 says, “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

My husband left to go to the officer’s training school for eight weeks. He was constantly in my prayers, and, as we start this journey as a unified family, he still is. I’m humbly excited to see where God is going to take us.

Be of good courage. If God is calling your spouse, He is calling you too, because you are one. Trust the Faithful God who will never abandon you and who will be your strength to carry on. 

Libna Arroyo is assistant professor of psychology at Pacific Union College. Her husband, Jonathan, is a hospital and Air Force chaplain. They have two children, Nolan and Katherine. She enjoys cooking, reading, hiking, and walking on the beach in her free time. She also enjoys being part of book clubs with a group of girlfriends.

Maybe as you read this, you are battling with the pastor’s call, chaplain’s call, military call, or another calling altogether. You are not alone.



CHARLIE'S STORY

AN ANGRY MAN AND A MIRACLE OF GRACE

MY HUSBAND WAS PASTORING a three-church district in rural Ohio when the phone rang. It was a non-attending member named Richard whom we had never heard of. He requested a visit for his father, Charlie, who was in the hospital and not expected to make it. Not knowing the person on the other end of the phone didn't stop us from getting to the hospital as soon as we could.

As we entered Charlie's room, we noticed he was almost longer than the bed. He didn't look comfortable or healthy. Walking to the other side of the bed, my husband introduced himself as the pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Since time was of the essence, he decided to get right to the point. "How is it between you and God?"

I have been cursed out before, and since, but never as explosively and vehemently as Charlie dished it out. It was especially intense in such proximity. Charlie let us know in no uncertain expletive terms that he had no time for Jesus. Then he ordered us out of the room.

My husband said, "Let me pray with you before we go."

Before Charlie had time to protest, we bowed our heads while my husband prayed quickly. "Dear Heavenly Father, please help Charlie make a decision for you before it's too late. In Jesus' name, Amen."

With that, we darted out of the room. The elevators were right outside Charlie's room, so we elected to take the stairs as they offered a quicker exit. I was surprised that Charlie allowed us to pray for him and was very thankful that he didn't say anything else.

Halfway down to ground level, we stopped and looked at each other. "Wow, that could not have gone any worse!" After getting home, we licked our wounds for a couple of days and then got over it.

Two weeks later, we got a call from Richard, Charlie's son. We figured it was the "Will you bury my father" call. Instead, it was a "Will you come and baptize my father" call.



SCAN FOR AUDIO



Charlie's Story

My husband said, "Wait a minute, is this the dad we visited in the hospital? That didn't go very well!" Leaving out some parts of the encounter, my husband explained that he went away confident that Charlie wanted absolutely nothing to do with us.

"My dad didn't die," Charlie's son said. "He got better and came home. My mother is barely half my dad's size, so I came over to help her take care of the heavy stuff. Dad and I started talking, and then studying the Bible, and he is now asking to be baptized before he dies. We don't know how long my dad has now."

So we went over to Charlie's home to baptize him. As we walked into the home, I noticed the iceberg fully encompassing Charlie's wife. There seemed to be a negative past story there. We gingerly walked up to Charlie's bedroom and peeked around the corner. Our history with him had left us just a little tentative.

"Hi Charlie," we greeted. He lit up with a smile! He was happy to see us and praised God that we had come. This was definitely not the hospital Charlie! My husband cleared him by going through the teachings of the Bible to be sure Charlie understood what he was doing.

Charlie was too weak to leave the house, so we ran water in the bathtub. Getting him into the wheelchair was difficult, and then wheeling his chair into the smallest bathroom ever made wasn't easy either. I remember the son straddling the tub, and my husband standing on the toilet to help Charlie get in there. With Charlie's legs straight up the wall, Richard ran the water.


My husband told him, "You're going to have to allow me to put your head under the water." The rest of us crowded in the doorway for lack of space. We had to hang on to each other to keep from falling as we witnessed Charlie being baptized. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen." Quickly, Richard pulled the plug, and my husband held Charlie's head above water while the drain slowly glugged the water down. It was the best baptism ever.

Getting Charlie's huge frame back into the bedroom, dried, clothed, and back to bed took a while. I took the opportunity to try and get next to his icy-cold wife. By the time we left, she was relaxed and smiling.

We thought we would never see Charlie again, but a month later my husband noticed someone who looked a lot like Charlie in the back row as he was preaching. Sure enough, it was Charlie, God bless him. He came to church as soon as he was strong enough, even though he was all by himself. Neither his wife nor his son came to help him.

Charlie was at church every week after that, no matter the circumstances. Neither deep snow nor freezing ice nor the heat of the sun kept him from coming to worship. During an ice storm, when 90 percent of the members took a day off, Charlie was there walking on the ice with his cane. He made it up the steps without falling. In the hottest weather, when the church was un-air-conditioned, Charlie was there, sweating with the rest of us. Eventually he brought his family with him, and they filled the back row. His sweet disposition and warm smile were always a pleasure to see.

We left that district for another and later learned that Charlie had passed away. We were sorry that he was gone, but it was hard to be sad for long. We knew we would see him on the other side. Our glorious Savior will wake him from his slumber, and we will worship together at the feet of Jesus!

Never be ashamed to share your faith and never be ashamed to pray—even in what seems like a hopeless situation. Matthew 19:26 says, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." "I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ" (Philemon 1:6). 

Diana Bruch is a retired pastor's wife and former Community Services director for the Michigan Conference and Lake Union. She earned a degree in nursing from Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) and became a certified senior advisor. She enjoys her three children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She has always loved Jesus and telling stories to help others love Him too.



SHARING YOUR STORY

GOD MAKES IT EASY!



SCAN FOR AUDIO

REMEMBER THE STORY about the demoniac in Mark 5? A demon-possessed man rushes toward Jesus. The disciples flee but then realize Jesus isn't with them. They turn around to find Him casting the demons out. The demons enter pigs, which run off a cliff into the lake—and the people beg Jesus to leave!

As Jesus steps into the boat, the healed man begs to go with Him. But Jesus says, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19).

Verse 20 says, “So [the healed man] went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.”

What's truly amazing is what happened when Jesus returned: “When they had crossed over . . . people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was” (Mark 6:53–55).

Ellen White writes, “When Jesus returned to Decapolis, the people flocked about Him, and for three days, not merely the inhabitants of one town, but thousands from all the surrounding region, heard the message of salvation. Even the power of demons is under the control of our Savior, and the working of evil is overruled for good” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 340).


All that from one man sharing what God had done for him!

I believe that is what God asks of us: to share our story of what God has done for us.

YOUR STORY, YOUR MINISTRY

You may think, “I don't have a story.” But you can! Spend quality time with Jesus every day—read the Bible, pray, get to know your God, and say “yes” to His leading. If you do this every day (or most days) you'll have a story—and others will come to Jesus because of your testimony.

God will gift you for the ministry He wants you doing. That's what has happened to me. God has taken me all over the world to share what He's done in my life. By God's grace, I have seen many people converted by the Holy Spirit. I'm not boasting; I just want you to know what can happen when a shy, hesitant person like me decides to spend time with Jesus! If God can use me, He can use anybody.

Jesus wants to use you just as powerfully as He did the former demoniac. If you're not already spending quality time daily with God, why not begin again today? You will find your own life, and the lives of those around you, transformed by the incredible testimony God will give you. 

Excerpted from <https://www.ministerialassociation.org/pastoral-families/spouses/magazine/archives/2012/4/sharing-the-journey>.

Janet Page, retired GC Ministerial associate secretary, is now a full-time grandma enjoying life through the eyes of her grandchildren. She loves being involved with her local church and community for Jesus.



RIPPLES OF HAPPINESS!

SHARE A LOT OF SMILES

START A CIRCULAR SMILE!

Every morning, when Mommy opened her eyes, she imagined God smiling at her with love, and it made her smile too. When she went to wake up Tommy, she kissed him and gave him a great big hug. Tommy smiled back and gave her a great big kiss!

At breakfast, his little sister Sarah was worried about her spelling test, so Tommy prayed for her and found fun ways to teach her all the words. She began to smile again.

On the playground, James was sad because his pet hamster had escaped from its cage. Sarah prayed that his hamster would be safe, and then she played ball with him. Soon James was smiling again.

James' friend, Katie, was sad because she forgot her lunchbox. James shared his sandwiches with her to make her happy again.

When Katie's dad met her at the school gates, he looked very worried. Katie told him how much she loved him, and he smiled again.

They stopped at a gas station on the way home, and a lady was sad because she had forgotten her purse and couldn't pay for her gas. Katie's dad helped her, and she smiled again. And that lady was Tommy's mommy!

Can you see how the smile Mommy shared was passed around a big circle and came right back to her? Pray that your kindness and smiles will be passed on from person to person, and maybe they will make a big circle and come back to bless you too!

Draw a picture of the smile being shared with each person in the story!



A GIRL WHO SHARED JOY



Read the amazing story of Naaman's maid in 2 Kings 5:1–19. The little girl had been taken away from her family. Even though she was very sad, she decided to work hard and help her new mistress. When Naaman became sick with leprosy, she told the family about the prophet Elisha and her wonderful God. Naaman visited Elisha, and his leprosy was healed! How do you think Naaman treated the little girl when he came back healed? How did his wife feel when she saw that his leprosy was gone?

Draw a happiness circle for this little story, showing how joy was shared.

You could also act out the story or write the story as if you were the little girl.

Do you know a sick person? How can you pray for them and bless them?

GOD SMILES OVER YOU!

Did you know that God smiles over you, soothes you with His love, and sings happy songs over you?

Read Zephaniah 3:17 and talk with your family about this beautiful description of God. Then draw a picture to illustrate the verse and remind yourself that God delights in you!

A LITTLE BIT HAPPIER ...



Try playing this game on your own, or with your family:

Every time you talk to someone, aim to leave them feeling a little bit happier than when you met them.

Smile, be helpful, speak kindly, and say something encouraging.

You are sharing ripples of happiness and helping people to feel God's wonderful love for them.

BEING KIND MAKES YOU HAPPY!



Did you know? Helping makes you happy! God designed your brain so that whenever you help someone or make them feel better, you feel happy too! Amazing!

Next time you see someone sad or someone who needs help, do something nice for them and see how it makes you both happy.

Create a fun poster to remind everyone in your family to be kind to each other and share their love and smiles with others!



A BOY WHO SHARED JOY

A little boy shared joy with thousands of people, just by giving his little lunch to Jesus! Read the story in John 6:1–13. Draw his lunch in the center of a sheet of paper. Then draw ripples around the food and say who was blessed by his kindness. The boy shared his lunch with Jesus—the first ripple. What are the second, third, and even fourth ripples of joy that were spread by his kindness? He did one small,

kind thing, and he made thousands of people happy! Tell each other how this story makes you happy too!

Act out this story together with bread and fish-shaped food.

Write the little boy's diary for the most amazing day of his life!

Do you know people who are hungry? How can you share your food with them?



KIND WORDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

How long does it take to say something kind and make people feel loved? Can you guess?

Someone measured the time it took for doctors to show care for their patients. They discovered that it only took 1 minute to say something kind and soothing, and it never took longer than 2 minutes! Many of the patients still remembered their kind words 6 months later!

Search the stories of Jesus to find short messages He said that made people feel loved and happy.

Make a list of kind things you could say and do in less than a minute for your family, neighbors, teachers, and friends. Your kind words can make a big difference!



SMILEY REMINDER

Use what you can find around your home to make a "smiley reminder" for your school bag, key ring, bicycle, or family car.

Create something sturdy and fun that reminds you to be cheerful and encourages your friends and family.

Whenever you smile, it makes you feel happy and confident, and you will look more beautiful or handsome! 📌

Karen Holford likes playing the game of leaving people happier than when she finds them! It makes the world a happier place, and it makes her smile too!

General Conference

During GC Session in St. Louis, Missouri, meetings were held for the women based on the theme “Jesus Is Coming! I Will Go Reach My World.” Many of the musical numbers were performed or led by ministerial spouse leaders. There were four days of meetings with devotionals by Nina Atcheson and seminars by Sikhu Daco, Karen Holford, Elaine Oliver, and Margret Mulambo. There was also a special lunch for division ministerial spouse leaders with the women’s ministries leaders.



Ministerial spouse leaders and women’s ministry directors gathered for a photo after a luncheon together.



Women enjoyed an exercise break during the women’s meetings at GC Session.



Ministerial spouse leaders lead song service during the women’s meetings at GC Session.

Northern Asia-Pacific Division

In April there was pastoral training for spouses in Mongolia with Raquel Arrais, ministerial spouse leader in Northern Asia-Pacific Division.



10 DAYS OF PRAYER

UNLEASHED!



JANUARY 7-17, 2026

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