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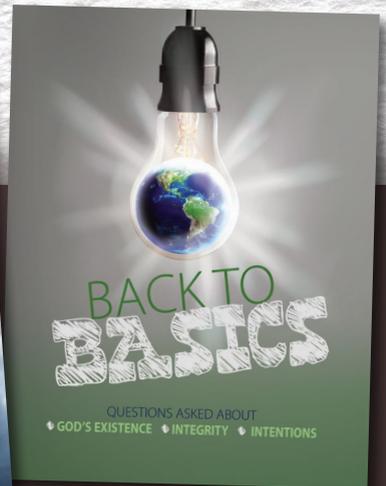
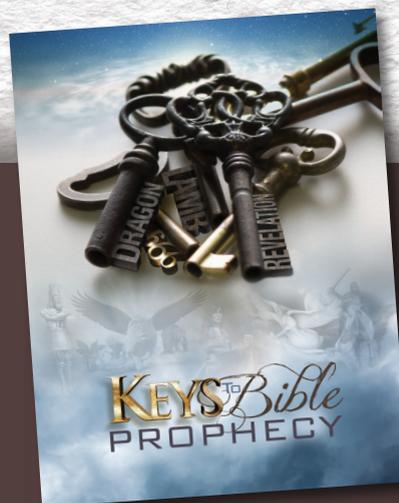
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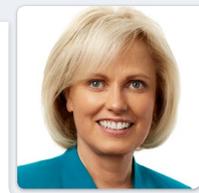
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Someone's watching

I hung up the phone in shock. Our son, Zac, had just been suspended from school for cheating. I couldn't believe it. How could he do something like this? He knew better. We had taught him right from wrong. I wanted to understand, and I needed to know why.

Then a question surfaced in my mind: *Why don't you ask God what you've done to make Zac do this?* I knelt in prayer and asked—but I admit that I was thinking I had not done anything to cause this.

However, my heavenly Father reminded me of certain teasing I had done for years. I knew it was misleading, but I had minimized it, saying, "I was just joking." Yet my son had been watching. If I could do what I knew was wrong, then so could he. I had taught him that obedience was optional.

Suddenly I realized that what he had done was my fault. I was devastated! But I was also grateful for God's promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NKJV).

When Zac got home from school that day, I knew he expected a lecture followed by consequences. Instead, I shared what happened to me.

"Zac, God has shown me that I am at fault for what you've done," I began. "He showed me that I've been doing something I know is wrong, and that's been a bad influence on you. I've confessed it as sin, and I know God forgives me. Will you forgive me for being such a bad example?"

I will never forget the look on his face or the tears in his eyes. That day I saw my rebellious teenager soften before my eyes. I am so grateful I listened to God's voice.

Jesus and I have been on a journey through my failures and victories, His forgiveness and healing, and the assurance of His everlasting love in promises like this: "Call to me and I will answer and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3, NIV).

Ellen White wrote: "It is because so many parents and teachers profess to believe the word of God while their lives deny its power, that the teaching of Scripture has no greater effect upon the youth."^{*}

Probably the worst statement I have heard about raising children is, "Do as I say, not as I do." Our lives speak volumes. That truth was brought home to us again one evening by our other son.

"If that's the way people are, I'm not sure I want to be a part of the church when I grow up," seven-year-old Tyson announced at the dinner table. He was listening to my husband and me discuss a conflict between church members. Shocked, Jerry and I prayed, asking God to forgive us, and we determined never to talk about negative church issues in front of our two sons. Even our young children are listening and understanding more than we realize.

In my thoughts, God was saying, *If you want your children to love Me and My church, tell them about Me and the miracles in people's lives, show them your joy in serving Me, teach them to pray for those who are hurting, and share the answers to those prayers.*

After that, our family worships became a time of praise and claiming promises with joy, instead of focusing on the negative.

Through the years, we have learned how powerful our influence is. As they were growing up, Tyson and Zac

*That day I saw
my rebellious
teenager
soften before
my eyes.*

watched Jerry and me get up early in the morning and each go to a private place on the floor to read the Bible and pray.

Today, these boys are grown men who love Jesus and are committed to serving their Savior in His church. Zac is a pastor, and Tyson is an attorney and head elder. Both are up early in the morning, on the floor reading the Bible and praying.

One thing I know without a doubt: If I will spend quality time with Jesus, reading His Word, praying, and giving Him permission to change me, He will surround me with His Spirit and teach me His ways. Through His power, my life will influence others—including my family members—to have a living experience with Jesus every day.

This issue of *Ministry* is on what the pastor should be, do, and know with regard to the family. We all know that a thriving family is a great asset to ministry. I pray that as you read these excellent articles and ask God to transform your life and family, you will experience His power and love. 

^{*} Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 259.

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Aim lower, think smaller!

The Bible often refers to the pastors' congregation as children of God—even as little children.¹ Jesus said, "You must let little children come to me, and you must never stop them. The kingdom of Heaven belongs to little children like these!" (Matt. 19:15, Phillips).

Could it be that the success of the pastors' ministry is directly related to how they treat the children in their churches? If so, it is imperative for pastors to understand their children.

Children come in a variety of personalities and passions. Johnny is an active and boisterous boy and a talented song leader. Pedro seems eager to learn but gets in the way of others. Keiko uses swear words but feels sorry afterward. Noemi loves Vacation Bible School and wants to follow Jesus. Sven has an inquisitive nature and asks lots of questions. We have them all in our children's programs.

Unfortunately, today's children face many challenges. Some struggle with bad habits and strong peer pressure. Others suffer with low self-worth and helplessness brought upon them by divorce, child abuse, and disasters. Still others are neglected or orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In the most recent world crisis, many children have been displaced and have become refugees. Is there any hope for our children? Can children find peace and security?

Yes, children can find peace in Jesus Christ. Children can be transformed through submitting to Christ, acknowledging Christ as *Lord* of their lives. But what do children today think of when

they hear the term *Lord*? Most likely it is *The Lord of the Rings* or Lord Voldemort, the archenemy of Harry Potter. Such characters have given our children a false concept of the Lord of life.

Children need to know that Jesus is our Protector and Guide. He bought us with His own blood and wants us to have eternal life and live with Him in heaven. We need to help children recognize God's command in 1 Peter 3:15, "But respect Christ as the holy Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have" (NCV). We want our children to acknowledge Jesus as the One who oversees every aspect of their lives—at school, play, dealing with friends, money, and time, to name a few. But what can the *church* do to make that happen? What can pastors do to ensure that children in their churches are nurtured to become disciples of Jesus, and that they will make Him the Lord of their lives?

Inspirational counsel

God speaks very clearly about the need to teach our children about Him. Deuteronomy 6 verses 6 and 7 reads: "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand" (NKJV).

Ellen G. White comments that "when Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him,

He was speaking to His followers in all ages—to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would say, They will come if you do not hinder them."²

Again, Ellen White strongly admonishes, "Those who love God should feel deeply interested in the children and youth. To them God can reveal His truth and salvation. Jesus calls the little ones that believe on Him the lambs of His flock. He has a special love for and interest in the children. . . . The most precious offering that the children can give to Jesus, is the freshness of their childhood."³

With such an important mandate, how can we afford not to put children as priority in our churches? How can we not invest our money and time in providing excellent teachers, plenty of resources, and ample space for children?

Research on faith development

Research strongly supports the importance of developing faith in children at an early age, for that would be the age when their minds are most susceptible to the gospel. George Barna's research discovered that the probability of someone accepting Jesus as his or her Savior was 32 percent for those between ages 5 and 12; four percent for those between ages 13 and 18; and six percent for young people 19 years of age or older. "In other words, if people do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior before they reach their teenage

years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim.”⁴

Barna further stated: “It is during those [pre-teen] years that people develop their frames of reference for the remainder of their life.”⁵ He later stated, “The early impressions we

one child?’ ‘No,’ Mr. Moody replied. ‘I mean two children and one adult. . . . The adult has only half of his life left.’ ”⁸

What valuable insight to propel us to look seriously at evangelizing children! In fact, Barna’s survey of pastors, church staff, and lay leaders indicated

minds and shape their decisions. Look at how McDonalds has impacted children around the world in choosing fast foods over healthy foods. Do not press the “pause” button any longer. We need to take active steps to put children as priority on our agenda!

I believe what we do with children at church is the most important ministry thrust that we will ever undertake.



make go a long way toward shaping a person’s worldview, relationships, dreams, expectations, and core reality.”⁶ The 4–14 Window initiative, pioneered by Luis Bush, has been proclaiming the importance of evangelizing children in the age range of 4 to 14. He believes that ministry to children becomes an optimal time to shape the church’s rising leadership.⁷

A case in point is the experience said to have been shared by Dwight L. Moody. The late evangelist was once asked how the night’s meeting had gone. “We had two and a half conversions,” he replied. “One person said, ‘I suppose you mean two adults and

that four out of five leaders said they participated in church children’s programs for a number of years before they turned 13.”⁹ Yes, I believe what we do with children at church is the most important ministry thrust that we will ever undertake. Why? Because research indicates that the moral, spiritual, and relational foundations of people’s lives are determined, primarily, by the age of 13. After that point it can be very difficult to change those ideas.

It is strange to note that Christians seem to be the only ones who believe they should wait to influence children’s minds. Advertisers do not wait. They get to work right away to capture those

Present church activities

On the whole, churches are interested in the spiritual development of children. We do see many churches operating Sabbath and Sunday Schools for children; providing Bible study guides for them; nominating teachers and leaders to instruct children each week; and running special programs during the year such as Vacation Bible School, children’s camps, health expos, Adventurers, Pathfinders, and others. Maybe once or twice a year one or two sermons regarding the importance of children are preached.

Yet in many other churches I have visited and provided teacher training,

children are *not* a high ministry priority. Children's leaders must "beg" for more funds even to buy supplies for their programs. In some churches, there are no funds to purchase Bible lessons for the children, or there is no space or room for children to gather. In fact, the Barna group took a random national sample of senior pastors leading Protestant churches. When asked to identify their church's top ministry priorities for the current year, only 24 percent mentioned ministry to children.¹⁰ Are we giving mixed messages?

We live in a different world now. Today's technology shows that savvy children are bombarded from all sides with the most ungodly influences. Parents, with their very busy lives, are not aware of what they are up against. Many church leaders' views of children's ministry remain rather antiquated, with little understanding of how critical it is to be intentional in developing a child's biblical worldview from his or her earliest years of life. George Barna's research

attempts to sound the alarm for all parents, pastors, leaders, and teachers: if we do not take this seriously, we are very likely to raise a generation of kids who do not know God.

Now that the alarm has sounded, there is a call for action. We find it calling us to invest more in children and invest more in children's ministry. Now is the time the church leadership needs a strategy to help transform the lives of children. We need to invest our resources, be it curriculum, finances, or personnel, to educate and inspire children to accept Jesus and nurture them into a loving, serving, relationship with Him. We cannot afford to look through a narrow glass and leave children out in the periphery of church life. They need to be part of our faith community.

Gary Hopkins, a renowned Christian researcher on youth and at-risk behaviors, says that the entire faith community should be a vital agent in the spiritual growth of youth.¹¹ It takes

a church to build and nurture faith in young people. It takes the faith community to show children and young people that the church cares about them. If church members take time to know the children and teens personally, eat and play with them, pray for and with them when they have difficulty, encourage them when they are discouraged, forgive them when they err, and support and counsel them, they are less likely to be involved in at-risk behaviors and more likely to stay with the church and with God. Yes, we are called to partner with parents in helping our children grow closer to Jesus.

The church that reaches children has a better chance of reaching its adults. Often children bring their parents and grandparents to church programs. They may attend our Vacation Bible School or a Bible camp, and they love it so much that they will invite their friends and parents too. I strongly believe that having a solid children's ministry can impact church



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growth. In fact, recent research supports this trend.

Children's Ministry magazine survey

The May/June 2016 issue of *Children's Ministry* magazine reported their recent research on the importance of children's ministry on church growth. It surveyed 586 churches and families who attend those churches regarding the role children's ministry plays in their church experience. Participants represent areas all over the United States, but the large majority comes from suburban areas (55 percent), followed by rural areas (24 percent) and urban areas (21 percent). Numerous denominations were represented in the study. The survey yielded several findings, but three are highlighted here.¹²

Finding 1: Children's ministry becomes a major conduit for getting families involved in ministry. The survey shows that 76 percent of families stated that children's ministry plays a key role in their church. Children's ministry not only gets kids involved in church but also greatly influences the parents to get involved in ministry too. As many as 65 percent of parents say they are regularly involved in the ministry as volunteers who help monthly or weekly.

Finding 2: A healthy children's ministry attracts families to your church. In today's postmodern society, where many do not believe in God, reaching children is one of the most effective ways to make contact with unchurched families. Inviting children to your Vacation Bible School, sports day, or children's camp opens doors for meeting their parents and family members.

Pamela Hudson, volunteer coordinator at Christ Fellowship Church in West Palm Beach, Florida, says, "We have a lot of parents who say they chose our church for what it has to offer their kids. . . . God uses children's ministry to minister to the whole family; a quality kids' experience will help the church grow." The research shows that 62 percent

of the families said children's ministry programs are "very important" when considering which church to attend.

I have witnessed this happening at the Messy Church program in the Trans-European region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This program is an outreach program to reach unchurched families. Families are invited to bring their children to the Messy Church where they make crafts, sing songs, listen to a Bible story, eat together, and socialize. This program has been operating in England, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Norway, and other countries in this region. The results have been heartwarming. In speaking with some families, they have indicated that they are now attending church, and some have been baptized.

Finding 3: Parents say children's ministry makes a positive impact in their child's life. One can see that parents recognize that children's activities, programs, and events impact their children's day-to-day lives. As many as 46 percent said they frequently participate in the children's ministry activities and their children look forward to attending programs and ministry events. Another 42 percent said that children's ministry has become a central component in their family discussions, planning, and activities.

Listen to these parents' comments: "It gives my kids the tools to deal with real life from a Christian perspective," "It educates my kids on the tenets and beliefs of the Christian faith," and "It gives my kids exposure to positive Christian role models through the volunteers and staff." They all underscore the benefit of children's ministry in helping children to develop a personal, growing faith.

On my travels to many children's programs around the world church, I have met children and teens whose lives have been changed when they met Jesus at these programs. Mateo of Brazil conducted Bible studies for his neighbors and brought them to Jesus. Five-year-old Graciela from Cuba

loved her Bible stories so much that she introduced her kindergarten teacher to Jesus. Little John Cox joined the "Little Trumpets Preacher's Club" and has preached at a children's evangelistic meeting in the Philippines. Children's ministry programs undoubtedly have impacted the lives of children in many ways.

Such research draws our attention to refocus on the importance of having children's ministry in our churches. We cannot afford to relegate children and teens to the back rooms or to make them last on our priority list of funding and support. The time has come for pastors, elders, leaders, parents, and the entire church to get serious about prioritizing ministry to children in their churches. Provide them with resources, excellent teachers, good budgets, opportunities for involvement, and protection. Involve them in worship. Involve them in the life of the church. Involve them in leadership roles in the church. We need a paradigm shift. Let's *aim lower, think smaller!* 

- 1 For example, 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (KJV).
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 517.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2009), 373.
- 4 George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 34.
- 5 George Barna, "Evangelism is Most Effective Among Kids," accessed April 11, 2017, www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/.
- 6 George Barna, "Leaving a Mark," May 13, 2010, georgebarna.com ("Leaving a Mark" that included the quote has disappeared from georgebarna.com).
- 7 Luis Bush, *Raising Up a New Generation from the 4-14 Window to Transform the World*, accessed March 29, 2017, www.m414.org/m414files/4-14Window-en.pdf.
- 8 Quoted in James Merritt, *In a World of . . . Friends, Foes & Fools: Fathers Can Teach Their Kids to Know the Difference* (Camarillo, CA: Xulon Press, 2008), 194.
- 9 George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions*, quoted in John W. Kennedy, "The 4-14 Window: New Push on Child Evangelism Targets the Crucial Early Years," *Christianity Today*, July 1, 2004, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/july/37.53.html.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Gary L. Hopkins and Joyce W. Hopp, *It Takes a Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2002).
- 12 *Children's Ministry* magazine (May/June 2016).

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Nurturing the faith of pastors' kids: Reflections on a pastoral family stress study

Katy Perry. Jessica Simpson. Rick Warren. Jonas Brothers. Franklin Graham. What do these people all have in common? All of them are pastors' kids (PKs).¹ They all fit into one of the many stereotypes that abound regarding children of clergy. This includes everything from the model pastor's kid who does everything by the rulebook to the rebel child who has backslidden from the faith and everything else in the middle. Yet these stereotypes come with many underlying assumptions and expectations that, in many ways, can contribute to pastors' kids becoming self-fulfilling prophecies.

Unlike many other professionals, pastors live their professional and, sometimes, even their private lives in a public arena. Their spouses and their children join them in this public spotlight that often comes with intense spiritual and moral scrutiny and the expectation to exemplify a "perfect" spirituality and commitment to the church. These expectations, or scrutiny, can be a challenge to children of pastors as they transition to adolescence and then to adulthood.² As these children of clergy experience these challenges and other normal developmental tasks of children their age, they are often labeled as having the worst reputation of all.

Parenting pastors' kids

As a mother of now adult children who were raised as PKs, I have long been interested in the faith development and spiritual nurture of children. The passage found in the book of Proverbs: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6, NASB) was a refrain I had heard my entire life, and it resonated for my husband and me as we raised our children.

Pastors and their spouses often wonder what they should be doing or could have done differently to nurture the spirituality or faith of their children. We often blame ourselves for not doing enough to foster their faith or for being too strict or for being too lenient. Did we spend enough time with them or live by example? My husband and I have often questioned whether we had done enough or too much—did we have enough family worship, did we have too many spiritual activities, were we too lenient regarding spiritual matters, or were we too strict?

During my early parenting years, I was fastidious as a mother hen in trying to protect my children from being caricatured as the proverbial "PKs." And I did my best to shield them from the barrage of unrealistic expectations from church members and even their

own friends. Their dad and I tried not to put pressure on them to do things just because they were our kids but to do things only if they felt inspired to do so. Of course, there were times that they were strongly encouraged to participate in certain religious activities and other activities because those were the "house rules."

Influence on spiritual beliefs

All parents are aware that values, especially spiritual and moral values, are primarily transmitted from parents to children. For clergy parents, this transmission is especially important; however, when it does not happen, there can be a lot of pain, shame, and blame.

Parents, whether clergy or not, have the most influence on their children's spiritual beliefs and practices, usually, through adolescence. However, while they may continue to influence them through their transition into adulthood, there are other socializing agents and normal developmental processes that influence their religiosity and spirituality.

Other adults. As adolescents transition to young adulthood, they will interact with adults other than their parents. This influence may come in

the form of faculty and staff in their high school or university, youth group leaders at church, or other family members with whom they connect. Some researchers on spirituality of young adults have found that many students look for answers to their questions on faith and spirituality from their teachers.³

Peers. During their children's transition from adolescence to early adulthood, parents have less influence on their children than do peers. A primary predictor of religiosity in young adulthood is having religious friends and role models during high school.⁴

Media. In today's world, most of us find it nearly impossible not to interact with the media in some shape or form. Without a doubt, our lives are impacted by this interaction. Our children, adolescents, and young adults hear concepts that appeal to them, combine them with their previously held traditions and religious beliefs, and then construct their own religious identity. Many are exploring their faith while listening to music or watching the latest music video or movie.⁵

Spiritual struggle. Struggling spiritually is a normal part of human development and usually occurs when there is a clash between previously held worldviews and newly acquired experiences or information. As adolescents enter young adulthood, this "crisis," or point of transition, is a contributing factor to spiritual development.⁶ Spiritual struggle can lead to spiritual growth or may lead to rejection of values held from childhood and may never be replaced with anything else.

Perception is reality

Personal spirituality and the struggle that comes with it seems to be a challenge common to most people of faith, and children of clergy may be no different from other children in general in their spirituality and religious commitment. Yet many pastors' kids perceive there is an expectation that they would not have such challenges. In a study conducted at Andrews University on pastoral family stress,

children of clergy who participated in the focus groups reported feeling there is an expectation from others that they should be more spiritually mature than their peers. One participant shared how difficult it was to deal with this expectation "starting at a young age,

that they would want to perhaps share with their pastor, and not necessarily their parents, but the pastor is also their parent. Thus, they must keep it to themselves or go through issues alone. For many, it feels as if they are going to church without a pastor. Others,

There are things that they would want to perhaps share with their pastor, and not necessarily their parents, but the pastor is also their parent.

even though we haven't developed that connection with Christ yet . . . and you don't want to disappoint anyone, so you work harder to compensate for what you don't have."⁷

For pastors' kids, the pressure of living their private lives on a public stage is one that does not allow much room for personal struggles and normal growth development, in contrast to other children, who often get to go through their development behind closed doors. This reality for PKs has a potential impact on their emotional health, including anxiety and guilt. One participant in the pastoral family stress study shared that "sometimes there is a sense of if I don't meet these expectations of people, like they are all going to go to hell because of me." For some, the emotional pressure leads to depression; for others, it creates an "I don't care what the church people say, or what they think" attitude.

Another perception or reality that pastors' kids have is that they have no one to turn to in their spiritual struggle. When they are struggling with issues and make mistakes, there are things

however, feel that these struggles lead to deeper spiritual growth.

Parents are still important

The well-known passage in Proverbs 22:6 mentioned earlier is not only a relational directive but also a promise. Per the Bible Exposition Commentary,⁸ Solomon, the author of Proverbs, reminds parents and instructors of children of their great responsibility in propagating wisdom and transmitting values, so that they do not die with them. Children are to be trained in the way that loving parents believe is the best direction for them to go, but it should be done with tender care. And when they are old, even if they depart from their early teachings as Solomon did, this early training may be a means of recovery. That is the promise—parents can be comforted that they did their best with their children.

During adolescence, parental support serves as a protective factor against certain risk behaviors and is associated with increased commitment to God and church. It appears that the

same is true for pastors' kids.⁹ Familial support appears to enhance a positive spiritual experience and increased commitment to the church. Many parents falsely assume that once their children enter adolescence or young adulthood, they no longer need them or want them interfering in their lives. During this stage, they are trying to differentiate from their parents and gain a better understanding of their role at home, school, church, and in society at large. However, this does not mean they no longer need or want their parents. The contrary appears to be true; they certainly need us, even if they need us to enter their world in a nonjudgmental and sincere way.

Strategies for nurturing the faith of pastors' kids

Put first things first. Schedule family time. Many pastors' kids perceive that their pastor parent is often absent or unavailable. Make time for the people who are most important to you. This seems like a good way to model to the congregation healthy family boundaries. Our kids feel special and appreciated when they feel that they are most important to us.

Be warm, loving, affectionate, and authoritative. The results of the pastoral family stress study suggest that pastors' kids whose parents establish a warm, loving relationship with them, spend time with them, and are consistent in their spirituality will more likely be religiously committed in adulthood. Parental bonding (or attachment) pertains to the level of closeness between a parent and child and is critical for healthy child development. An *authoritative* parenting style means one in which parents provide a warm, loving, nurturing environment, where clear boundaries are established and open communication is encouraged.¹⁰ This is not to be confused with an *authoritarian* parenting style, which sets boundaries without warmth, where parents are strict and inflexible and have high expectations without providing support. Authoritative parenting is also not *permissive*, where there

is much warmth and affection but few or no boundaries are set. Our children know we love them when we show them love and set healthy, age-appropriate boundaries.

Provide a safe environment for their spiritual struggle. Remember that spiritual struggle comes as a normal process of faith, and spiritual development takes place during adolescence (and possibly earlier) and their transition into early adulthood. Do not panic! Remain calm. Remember that creating a safe space for open dialogue about their doubts, fears, and questions about God's existence and the relevance of the church will keep the lines of communication open now and in the future. Parents should consider reading books or attending seminars on how to better understand their children as it pertains to their lives in the pastorate and regarding their spiritual journey.

Encourage peer support. Many of the participants in the study said they benefited from the opportunity to express what they were experiencing as pastors' kids. From a psychotherapeutic perspective, we can suggest that they felt validated. Their individual and collective voices had been heard, and they realized they were not alone on their journey. Many requested that more forums on this topic could be regularly held. The Seventh-day Adventist world headquarters has a committee for pastors' kids, and several successful "PK" conferences have been held in various parts of the world.¹¹

Protect your children. Be sensitive to the pressures that uniquely affect your children. The pastor and spouse can protect their children when the congregation or other well-meaning individuals set unreasonable expectations for them. Pastors should defend their children when necessary and educate their parishioners on how to relate to their children, encouraging them to be more understanding of their children and family's life in a "stained-glass fishbowl." Also, allow your kids to make mistakes. Use those mistakes as an opportunity to exhibit grace and

forgiveness. Hopefully the children will learn from their mistakes.

Pray, pray, and keep praying. Parenting, known as a huge blessing, comes with many challenges. We should approach it with humility and in reverence to God for giving us the opportunity to prepare His children for the kingdom. In the book *Child Guidance*, Ellen G. White says, "Build a fortification of prayer and faith around your children, and exercise diligent watching thereunto. You are not secure for a moment against the attacks of Satan. You have no time to rest from watchful, earnest labor. You should not sleep a moment at your post. This is a most important warfare."¹²

The fight is with the enemy and not with our children. Our kids need us to be on their team. 🙏

- 1 Barna Group, "Prodigal Pastors' Kids: Fact or Fiction," Barna, November, 11, 2013, www.barna.com/research/prodigal-pastor-kids-fact-or-fiction/.
- 2 Elaine Oliver and Willie Oliver, "Managing Pastoral Family Stress," (presentation, Second Global Health Conference on Health and Lifestyle, Geneva, Switzerland, 2014).
- 3 Carolyn McNamara Barry et al., "Religiosity and Spirituality During the Transition to Adulthood," *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 34, no. 4 (July 2010), 311–324.
- 4 Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe and Kristin A. Moore, "Predictors of Religiosity Among Youth Aged 17–22: A Longitudinal Study of the National Survey of Children," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (December 2002), 613–622.
- 5 Barry et al., "Religiosity and Spirituality," 311–324.
- 6 Kenneth I. Pargament et al., "Spiritual Struggle: A Phenomenon of Interest to Psychology and Religion" in *Judeo-Christian Perspective on Psychology: Human Nature, Motivation, and Change*, ed. William R. Miller and Harold D. Delaney (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005), 245–268.
- 7 D. Sedlacek et al., "Executive Summary: Seminary Training, Role Demands, Family Stressors, and Strategies for Alleviation of Stressors in Pastors' Families" (report to the North American Division Ministerial and Family Ministries Departments in conjunction with the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, September 2014).
- 8 Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2003).
- 9 Sedlacek et al., "Executive Summary."
- 10 Based on Diana Baumrind's Parenting Styles.
- 11 For more information, contact the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, at their Team PK website ministerialassociation.org/teamPK.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), 185.

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The Second Clergy Wives Club

She was a saint, and you're certainly not!"

These words from a "man of the cloth" stung like a swarm of bees. He demonstrated what he believed was his God-given right and diligent duty to inform Anne¹ that she was an unsuitable partner, and even a most improper person, to be the wife of "the Lord's anointed." So why all the hostility?

Anne was on the verge of becoming the *second* wife to an established pastor after the death of his first wife. The tears did not flow. All Anne felt was an overwhelming numbness and a sense of being removed from a reality that she had anticipated since she agreed to a marriage proposal. Little did she realize that her life would go from private to so very public overnight. Never could she have known that her every action would be scrutinized over and over, and with meticulous coldness, disdain, and criticism.

Jane was out with her husband when he stopped to give a member a lift to another part of the city. The member stepped into the car and said, "Pastor, how are you?" But when Jane turned to greet her, the woman refused to even acknowledge her presence, and ignored her for the 20-minute ride.

Claire tells of a group of women who would treat her with complete and utter indifference when she visited their church. "We've known him much longer than you," one was bold enough

to inform her as she sat speechless at the rear of the church, all alone.

When I heard these ladies' stories, I recalled my own journey as part of the Second Clergy Wives Club, and the numerous encounters with disapproval that I have experienced. After nearly 16 years of marriage, I can finally look back at our courtship, engagement, wedding, and the first 7 years (or so) of marriage without anger but, instead, with a sense of peace and an attitude of forgiveness.

Challenges

The death of a pastor's wife can be the source of long-term corporate grief for the local congregation and the wider church community where her husband has ministered. It may also be extremely sobering for her husband's colleagues, especially those of a similar age. I recall that I attended the funeral of my husband's first wife. There was not even standing room in the church, and the courtyard was overflowing with mourners. I witnessed a complete outpouring of sorrow and grief after months of praying, fasting, and hoping that the Father would work a miracle and that she would recover.

Corporate grief is similar to personal grief—except on a much grander and intense scale. The untimely death of Princess Diana on August 31, 1997, caused a tidal wave of grief throughout the world. Even for months after, people

were walking around as if in a daze, not quite believing what had happened.

Counselors have acknowledged seven stages of grief, usually designed for individuals but also applicable to groups.² The corporate grief for the loss of a pastor's wife begins with shock and denial. Then there exists the pain and guilt. Even in church organizations and among believers, there is a sense of anger, questioning, and bargaining. This is quickly followed by depression and reflection, and even in congregations there can be an intense sense of loneliness as they consider their own future demise. And while, as Christians, we have the reassurance of the blessed hope, the earthly reality of death continues to be painful.

In the midst of their grief, the congregations then witness an "intruder" attempting to sabotage that process by steering their pastor to a new life—one that may appear to be alien to them and causes consternation, surprise, and a deep sense of unease. While they are trying to come to terms with their loss, they see the pastor as "moving on" too quickly, and their response often becomes erratic.

Expectations

Another huge challenge is that there can be enormous expectations of the second pastor's wife from the church, his pastoral colleagues, his employers, and other clergy spouses. If the former

wife was hospitable, the second wife is expected to be the same. If she played a musical instrument or was excellent at telling the children’s story, the second wife would be expected to do the same, at least just as well, preferably better.

Jane remembers bursting into tears when she was told that her macaroni and cheese did not live up to that of her husband’s first wife. Jane, a corporate lawyer, describes herself as “adequate” in the kitchen. While she was able to win most of her corporate cases, she was considered an unbecoming model because her skill set differed from congregational expectations. Even though

greater my alienation from my church, my husband, and my God. It took years of prayer and counseling for me to come to terms with my role and also feel an affinity to the members.”

Honoring memories

While there are many trials that often make one want to throw in the towel, there are also enormous joys that come with ministering as the second wife of your spouse. About a year before we got married, my husband took on the role of youth director in our union. Although he had been in youth leadership for much of his ministry,

Forgiveness

Jesus’ prayer, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34, KJV), became very real to me after a few years of being part of the Second Clergy Wives Club. If I had not learned to forgive, then I would be a very bitter ministerial spouse. I had to learn to let go of the enormous burden of pain that comes with bearing a grudge.

Service

My greatest joy, however, is found in service with my husband. Visiting the sick and the dying with him, preparing

Being part of the Second Clergy Wives Club has also given me a new appreciation and respect for the work of the first wives, who are now deceased.

accomplished in her chosen field, Jane says that she has “felt inadequate” for a long time as she has constantly been compared to her husband’s first wife.

Feelings of alienation

With second clergy wives there may be a sense of alienation because of a lack of support from some members, clergy, and ministerial spouses. There seems to be a ministry for almost everyone and everything, but they are frequently on the fringes of the congregation, and often ostracized. Anne felt very lonely at church functions, especially when people seemed to always openly compare her to her husband’s late wife. These feelings of alienation often led to tears and anger, and consequently she distanced herself from church people in order to protect herself. “I was cold at worst, and civil at best,” Anne recalls, “and the more I distanced myself, the

he had spent the past two years working abroad, so this new appointment allowed us both a new start. While spending Sabbath after Sabbath on the road, attending numerous camping trips and youth activities, took its toll on us, we also had a chance to establish our own brand of ministry.

Being part of the Second Clergy Wives Club has also given me a new appreciation and respect for the work of the first wives—now deceased. I honor the memory of these women with renewed vigor, for they stood at the side of their husbands, even during situations that would take their lives. They were strong, yet silent in their pain. They were dignified under the threats of ailments that hospitalized them. They smiled courageously in the midst of adversity. They leave us, the second clergy wives, exemplary examples of Christian womanhood.

and delivering seminars and sermons, researching and writing articles together, and ministering and leading in the local congregation together has been very meaningful. As I reflect on my journey, I can see that I was drawn to the calling of the prophet Jeremiah to whom the Lord said, “ ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, / before you were born I set you apart; / I appointed you’ ” (Jer. 1:5, NIV). It was then that I realized that being one of the second clergy wives was not a capricious act; it was designed by my Father. My call to serve with my husband was no accident but part of the plan of God who knows the end from the beginning. 

1 The names used are pseudonyms.
2 “7 Stages of Grief: Through the Process and Back to Life,” Recover-from-grief.com, www.recover-from-grief.com/7-stages-of-grief.html.

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Pastor, you need to know

Over the years, I have observed that pastors have not only supported the department of Women's Ministries (WM) in the church but manifested a special interest in the spiritual and emotional well-being of our sisters. Nevertheless, unless a more urgent focus is given by pastors and church members alike to particular situations that women face, both in the church and in the world, our women will not only fall further behind their male counterparts but, and more importantly, fail to fulfill the God-given purpose of their creation.

The challenges

We have identified six challenge issues that affect women in the church and community in every country around the world: poverty; illiteracy; abuse; health; workloads; and lack of education, mentoring, and leadership opportunities.

As a church, we place much emphasis on evangelism, which is a clarion call in these last days as instructed in God's Word (Matt. 28:19, 20). In WM, we realize that women play a major role in evangelism, and so we seek to prepare them for outreach spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially.

But we are aware that women face many challenges (as listed above) and carry much pain. They deal with family problems, physical and emotional pain, depression, and the list goes on. Women need shepherding—but by other women. The question arises, “Is

there a relationship between shepherding and pastoral care?” Pastoral care consists of mentoring, pastoral counseling, discipling, and spiritual guidance, but that also describes shepherding. Both pastoral care and shepherding have similar goals.

As I travel the world, I hear the many stories from my sisters in countries so different from each other but where the pain that women experience is the same. No matter our language, culture, or social status, women cry the same, laugh the same, love our families the same, and hurt the same.

I listen to the stories of my sisters, women who have suffered abuse in their homes for many years, and they are either afraid to tell the pastor because of his gender or have shared their pain with the pastor or male elder and in return too often received only suggestions about what they can do to improve their situations.

Other women tell me of the years they have suffered with depression and have been afraid to share it because they wonder, *Who would understand?* Or there are other women who are experiencing life changes that are affecting their lives and do not know how to handle them, and they can find no one who can identify with their emotional pain to help. And the list goes on.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, for one, needs more women in leadership positions in the church. Having grown up in the Adventist Church, I saw only men in leadership roles. I recall the days when only men could participate

in the eleven o'clock service (pastor, elder, and deacon), and I wondered why a woman was not part of that group. I especially missed a woman to shepherd me in difficult times. I was most grateful for the pastor's wives who did their best, yet many were working women or had little children and were limited in what they could do.

The darkest time in my life was when we lost our four-year-old son, Joseph Jr., and I could find no one to help me through the valley of darkness, fear, and uncertainty. There was no one I trusted in my home church who could understand my pain and disappointment with God and who could tenderly walk alongside me.

Woman-to-woman

Women *need* another woman to shepherd their hearts. Why? Let me share a few reasons with you:

A woman can be an example of feminine godliness. It has long been agreed that the language of women differs from that of men. Women speak the language of emotions—“heart language.” This impacts our relationship with God. Negotiating our emotions and relationship with God can be a struggle for many women. Titus 2:3–6 underscores the need for women to help other women in their daily lives and Christian walk. Women “shape each other's attitudes and self-definitions as we converse, and from each other we learn what it means to be female.”¹ Having a woman seeking

after God be a mentor to other women is a blessing beyond words.

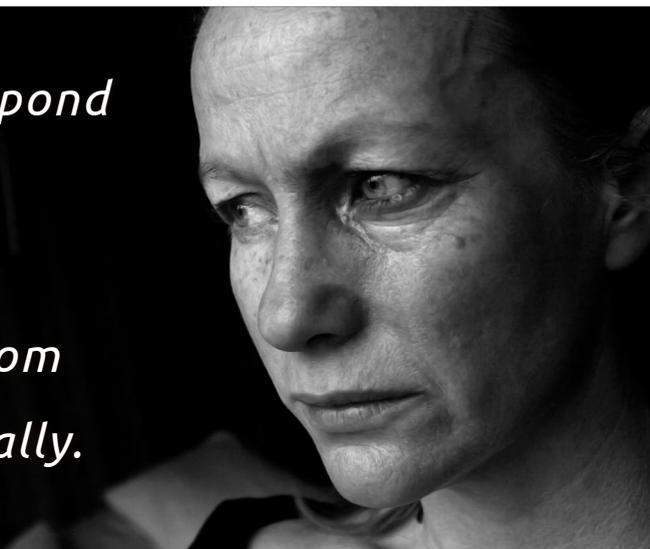
Most times women and men process pain in different ways. Women need to talk out our feelings, and this can be accompanied by many tears. We need to go through that process of talking it out before we can begin to think about how to fix things. Men seem to go straight to the solution stage. Many a well-meaning pastor has inflicted unintentional pain on a woman who comes for help and his response does

with respect as the weaker partner” (1 Pet. 3:7, NIV). I believe that God is instructing our husbands to remember that women experience much emotional and physical pain in the normal course of life, such as our monthly cycle, menopause, childbearing, and other “normal” aspects of our lives. At these times, we are weak. Only another woman can understand what we are experiencing and how to relate to us.

Women are natural nurturers. This nurturing gift God has given enables

caregiver that surfaces long-repressed feelings that overwhelm rather than help the person in need.”⁵ Women who are emotionally insecure can misinterpret the pastor’s kind words and actions and see them as they want to see them and not what the pastor may intend. In all relationships, there must be boundaries and accountability, but the danger to the women seeking counseling and to the pastor is greatly reduced when she is helped by another woman.

Women in pain will respond best to someone who can identify with them emotionally and to whom nurturing comes naturally.



not speak to her pain but to the solution. A pastor may say, “Maybe you need to spend more time in the Bible, pray more about the problem, love him more, and God will help.” These are well-meaning words, but they do not speak to the emotional and, often, physical pain a woman experiences.

Women understand each other. “There are times when being a woman just plain hurts.”² This can be physical pain brought on by the seasons of our lives or emotional pain that results from our hormonal changes and the multiple roles we carry in the home and society. “We are different [from men] anatomically, hormonally, socially, sexually, psychologically, and emotionally.”³ Peter writes, “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them

us to be excellent shepherds to other women. “Women proceed from a different frame of reference than men. They work first from a position of concerned involvement and caring. . . . Their frame of reference includes sensitivity unique to them . . . and includes deepened empathy [the ability to comprehend another’s experience]. . . . Girls and women focus on care.”⁴ Women in pain will respond best to someone who can identify with them emotionally and to whom nurturing comes naturally.

The risk of pastors’ involvement in both emotional and physical adultery can be decreased by women shepherding other women. “Particularly in situations of sexual abuse, for example, the problem in pastoral response is not too little empathy but too much indiscriminate empathy by an uninformed pastoral

Women who have been hurt by men may not want a man to shepherd them. A fact exists that many women in pain can point to a father, brother, husband, male friend, or other male who has been the object of their pain. No matter how well-meaning the pastor may be, the fear of men that this woman carries will always be a barrier between her and the pastor. She may never be able to articulate her fear, but seeking help from a male pastor will only deepen her trauma.

Women bring a balance to the leadership of the church. Ellen White counsels, “When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”⁶ In many situations the pastor seems overloaded with

church administrative work, the needs of members, and conference expectations. More women are needed in leadership positions in our churches because their perspective will be undeniably helpful to the church planning and care. In addition, if each pastor has a resource list of women who could shepherd other women in need, that would be an invaluable asset both to the pastor and to the church.

God has given spiritual gifts of shepherding to both men and women. When the Bible lists spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4, there is no gender discrimination. No limit exists to the gifts that God may bestow on men or women. The gifts needed to shepherd are given to both genders.

The gift of shepherding

There are women in our churches who have the gift of shepherding other women and who would gladly support the pastor in his ministry to the female members. There will be times when the female shepherd, like the pastor, may have to refer the woman in need to someone who is trained in counseling to assist them. But in many situations, a female shepherd can walk alongside the woman in her journey, not only to pray with her, which is needed, but also to stay in touch with her through her period of healing, to encourage her to join a support group, or to participate in a women's ministries event that would nourish her emotionally and spiritually.

The need for women shepherds becomes even more vital when one considers the many parts of the world where professional counselors are scarce. The pastor may have multiple churches, which increases the demands on his time, or professional counseling may not seem financially feasible for the woman in need to seek professional assistance.

Ellen White emphasizes that "in the various branches of the work of God's cause, there is a wide field in which our sisters may do good service for the

Master. . . . In the different churches, much work which is often left undone or done imperfectly, could be well accomplished by the help that our sisters, if properly instructed, can give. . . . The labors of such Christian women are needed."⁷

In women's ministries, we seek to nurture and empower our sisters through training in various areas so that she can be an effective woman of God in reaching out to other women who need Jesus. We believe the following words of Ellen White to all women and pray that our brothers in our church willingly make room for the ministry of women in our churches: "Woman, if she wisely improves her time and her faculties, relying upon God for wisdom and strength, may stand on an equality with her husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and co-worker, and yet lose none of her womanly grace or modesty. She may elevate her own character, and just as she does this she is elevating and ennobling the characters of her family, and exerting a powerful though unconscious influence upon others around her. Why should not women cultivate the intellect? Why should they not answer the purpose of God in their existence? Why may they not understand their own powers, and realizing that these powers are given of God, strive to make use of them to the fullest extent in doing good to others, in advancing the work of reform, of truth and real goodness in the world?"⁸

Final appeal

The global statistics for abuse against women state that one in three will experience abuse. That includes women in our churches. Over and over I am asked by abused women, "What is my church doing to help me?" In 2001, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee voted the fourth Sabbath of August as Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day. In 2009, the General Conference Women's Ministry and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) launched the

End-It-Now campaign. This global campaign was to raise awareness of the pandemic abuse of women and girls. The name was changed from Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day to End-It-Now Day.

From its inception in 2001 to the present time, this special day has been supported throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I appeal to pastors and church leaders worldwide to encourage your membership and departments to be involved in planning and implementing this very important day. We understand if you must change the particular day to one more convenient for your church calendar. All we ask is for you to facilitate the keeping of one Sabbath a year as End-It-Now day.⁹

Pastor, we continue to pray that God will abundantly bless you, your family, and your ministry. We want to be a strong support for you in your church. Remember, "it was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth."¹⁰ Thank you, Pastor, for your continued support of women, both in the church and in the community.¹¹ 

- 1 Brenda Hunter, *In the Company of Women* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1994), 21, 23.
- 2 Jean Lush, *Emotional Phases of a Woman's Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 20.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 4 Maxie Glaz and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, ed., *Women in Travail and Transition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 19.
- 5 Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, ed., *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 20.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 469.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 466.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 467.
- 9 For resources and more information on how to plan a special End-It-Now worship service at your church, visit the enditnow website at www.enditnow.org.
- 10 White, *Evangelism*, 471, 472.
- 11 Special thanks to Dr. Bev Hislop, my seminary professor, for her two excellent books, *Shepherding a Woman's Heart* and *Shepherding Women in Pain*.

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Pastoral marriages: A contemporary challenge

We have been married and in ministry for 32 years. Staying married to each other and still in ministry after all this time has everything to do with the providence and grace of God. God's grace, to be sure, does its best work when we accept the gift He offers and allow this gift to germinate and grow in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit, whose promptings we choose to follow.

Let's face it, marriage is difficult. Yes, we know marriage to be fun and all those wonderful things we often speak about. Nevertheless, despite our best intentions, the reality of differences that invariably loom large in most marriages keeps us on our knees. The truth is, this kind of reality we find based on a decision bathed in prayer and on being intentional about giving honor and glory to God in our marriage.

The pastoral marriage

Pastoral marriages face many of the same challenges as other marriages, and most busy professional couples replicate similar competing commitments experienced by many pastoral couples. The principal difference comes when pastoral couples have the added pressure of living in a fishbowl and with high expectations from their parishioners and employers to be all things to all people. This includes the role of spiritual champions in every

situation—especially in the way they disciple their children to be true followers of Jesus Christ. In addition to the ever-present challenge of not having enough time to accomplish all that lies on their plates, pastoral couples often deal with short tenures and frequent moves, which take them away from close connections with family and friends, thus upsetting their emotional equilibrium.

This experience is often compounded by financial constraints, since we are in a world where living on one salary has gotten increasingly difficult. Especially in the developed world, the pastor's spouse is often left having to find a new job, which may include many weeks and months with an interruption in wages, adding anxiety, tension, and trauma to an already stressful situation. It is in times like these that pastoral couples, like all Christian married couples, need to recognize that marriage is God's idea and was created for our good. "Instituted by God, marriage is a sacred ordinance and should never be entered upon in a spirit of selfishness. Those who contemplate this step should solemnly and prayerfully consider its importance and seek divine counsel that they may know whether they are pursuing a course in harmony with the will of God."¹

While marriage was designed by God to bless the human family, Satan has tried everything to denigrate,

depreciate, and defame this important institution. As such, expect your marriage to naturally move toward a state of alienation. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."² This simply reminds us that there are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. However, since God is more powerful than Satan, every marriage can thrive when the partners are intentional about connecting with each other every day through the power and grace of God.

A quote from an unknown author we often like to share says, "Getting married is easy. Staying married is more difficult." Staying happily married for a lifetime would be considered among the fine arts. This is true of every marriage and especially true of pastoral marriages that experience so many expectations from within and without.

To be sure, expectations surge from within because of the need to represent Jesus well. The concept may often be seen as the need to pretend to have a perfect marriage when you do not. Of course, the more pastoral couples feel compelled to present to the public an image that is not real, the less likely they are to accomplish that goal because of the stress generated internally, given the reality of our human frailties. The pressure from without comes from others, often church members, and sometimes from our families, friends,

colleagues, and employing organizations, which tend to hold pastors and their families to a higher standard than they do *regular* human beings. In order to transcend these insufferable burdens, pastoral couples must spend a lot of time in prayer, seeking a genuine relationship with God and with each other.

Speaking about the need to stay in prayer, Romans 12:12 offers: “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Yet Isaiah 65:24 declares: “ ‘Before they call I will answer; / while they are yet speaking I will hear.’ ”

And Ellen White reminds us in her little book *Steps to Christ*: “There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate

interest. ‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.’ Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.”³

Digital harassment

On the matter of time as a commodity in pastoral marriages, the proverbial tyranny of the clock has never been more real than what we are experiencing today. Email, Facebook, and text messages, along with countless new apps that emerge every day, give ubiquitous access to our time for anyone, everywhere, at any time, creating an expectation for receiving instantaneous responses. Each day has only 24 hours in which pastors must have time alone with God, visit parishioners, study, write sermons, attend organizational meetings, blog, give Bible studies, respond to email, engage social media, sleep,

eat, exercise, have family worship, and connect with relatives and friends. After we attend to all of these things, not only is there little energy left for anything else, there is no meaningful time to share with one’s spouse. And if we are really honest with each other, there is actually very little time to spend with God in prayer, which means we end up with very little fuel to have the wherewithal for an effective ministry and real satisfaction in one’s life.

Boundaries

So how does a pastoral couple create more time in the context of living in the third millennium in order to have the quality of relationship that makes life really worth living? The truth is, for this to happen, healthy boundaries must be established in order to survive and thrive. And healthy boundaries are found in the context of emotionally intelligent people, who have a high level of self awareness, knowing what they want to accomplish



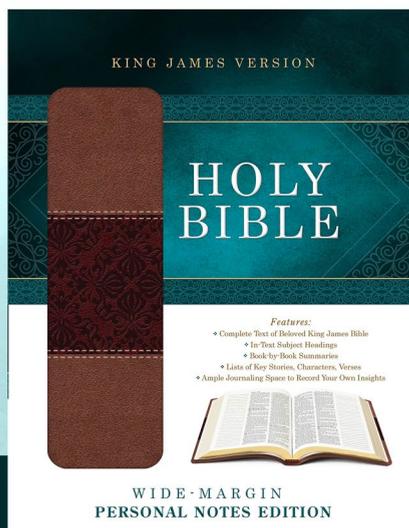
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WIDE-MARGIN
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in the process. On this matter, Daniel Goleman suggests: “Self-awareness is the first component of emotional intelligence. . . . Self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives. . . .

“Self-awareness extends to a person’s understanding of his or her values and goals. Someone who is highly self-aware knows where he is headed and why. . . . The decisions of self-aware people mesh with their values.”⁴

The self-awareness and emotional intelligence we speak about here does not just come because we have more education or are smarter than anyone else. It comes because of an intimate relationship with God and our desire to honor Him in our most intimate relationship with our spouse. This becomes the kind of emotional intelligence that brings peace.

On the issue of prioritizing and making the most of time, Stephen Covey suggests that “one of the worst feelings in the world is when you realize that the ‘first things’ in your life—including your family—are getting pushed into second or third place, or even further down the list. And it becomes even worse when you realize what’s happening as a result.”⁵

The truth remains that we cannot add hours to our day, but we can add order and priority to those hours so that we are able to maximize the time we have with our spouse each day, each week, each month, and each year to have the kind of relationship that will stand the test of time and give honor and glory to God. In order for things to change, if this has not been the priority of our lives, we will need to develop a new and improved framework to live by.

To be sure, we will need to shift the paradigm of our lives. This means we will need to see things differently and to do things differently in order to get a different result. In contrast to other relationships, which are constantly changing, marriage is meant to be permanent, and understanding that the responsibilities in marriage are not postponable will help us to *carpe diem*

(“seize the day”) so that we can make our marriage a high priority *each day*. This means scheduling meaningful time to spend with each other *each day*.

Moving from one place to another in the course of ministry becomes a reality that cannot be easily altered and is seen as the nature of the proverbial beast of ministry. I (Willie), as a pastor’s son, moved several times during my childhood and as a missionary’s child lived in at least three countries before I got to my teens. As a couple, we have lived in four different states in the United States, in eight different homes, and have had eight to ten different ministry assignments in three decades.

Each move has been challenging, though some were more traumatic than others. But in every move we have experienced the hand of God and blessings we would never want to do without. As the apostle Paul declares in Philippians 4:11 “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.”

The money factor

Of course, when it comes to money, we can always do with more. And, while pastors in certain parts of the world enjoy a middle-class or even upper-middle-class lifestyle—especially if their spouses have good professional jobs—in other areas of the world pastors suffer with meager resources and salaries, and their spouses do not get paid to work. And yet, the same God that we worship we must learn to trust in if our lives in ministry are going to be a blessing to others. We must follow our Master’s example of self-denial.

Financial stability, to be sure, depends as much on our philosophy of stewardship as it does on our habits of consumption. As mortals entrusted with the privilege of handling God’s Word to inspire and lead people to Him who is life eternal, we, too, must believe that God keeps His promises. As pastoral couples, we must claim the promises God made in the past to His people, which are still good for His disciples today. The message of Malachi 3:10 is still operative, which declares: “ ‘Bring the full tithe into

the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.’ ” God promises no lack of blessings if we are faithful to Him. In Matthew 28:20b, Jesus promises: “ ‘And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ ” In John 14:27 Jesus promises, “ ‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.’ ” And last but not least, in Philippians 4:19 the promise is, “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Conclusion

As we take another look at the reality of pastoral marriages, we must do so mindful of the fact that sometimes it is more difficult than it needs to be, because we approach this highly spiritual work without the corresponding spiritual values that must be present for it to work. As we stated, “Too many people today enter marriage with an individualistic notion of personal fulfillment rather than focusing on relationship fulfillment. While in healthy marriages couples need to strike a balance between both, there must be a sustained and intentional consciousness of otherness as a part of our daily reality. There is no other way to survive and thrive in such a close and intimate relationship such as marriage, without adopting a perspective that includes the feelings and opinions of others, at the very least the feelings and opinions of the person we have chosen as our spouse.”⁶

As you commit to nurturing your pastoral marriage today and in the weeks, months, and years ahead, we encourage you to remember Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 10:31 “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

May your relationship with God grant you the patience and kindness needed to give honor and glory to God through your marital relationship. More than hope so, we pray so. 🙏

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2001), 70.
- 2 All Bible references are from the English Standard Version.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA:

- Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 100.
- 4 Daniel Goleman, *What Makes a Leader: Why Emotional Intelligence Matters* (Florence, MA: More Than Sound, 2013), 10, 11.
- 5 Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective*

- Families* (New York: Golden Books, 1997), 113.
- 6 Willie and Elaine Oliver, "The Beauty of Marriage" in *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects*, ed. Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), 6.

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Cuban pastors thrive in adversity

Despite tremendous challenges, the church in Cuba is flourishing. I was privileged to see this myself as I attended the Second Ministerial Council of the Cuban Union Conference in early 2017 with Jerry and Janet Page of the General Conference (GC) Ministerial Association, Héctor Sánchez from the Inter-American Division Ministerial Association, and Joel Almaguel, president of the North Puerto Rico Conference, under the theme "For a Transformed Ministry." It was the first gathering of its kind since the reorganization of the union in 1941 and was well attended by more than 500 workers and their spouses under the leadership of the union ministerial secretary, Jesús Abreu.

Pastors in Cuba work in a society that has emphasized atheism and secularism for decades. Due to economic challenges, average monthly salaries are the equivalent of US\$25. (A pair of shoes costs US\$20!) Pastors have learned for years to work with modest means, trusting God to provide for their needs.

They are champions in strategic evangelism, always looking for new ways to implement Total Member Involvement in their territory. Through miracle after miracle, they are baptizing more than three thousand souls each year through small groups, Bible study courses, informal home churches, coordinated evangelism campaigns, lay-training programs, and active youth and children's ministries.

The church continues to grow against incredible odds!

Their brothers and sisters from the Puerto Rican Union donated bicycles and shoes to all Cuban district pastors, encouraging them with the words of Isaiah 52:7 "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news" (ESV). The General Conference Ministerial Association provided an honorarium to all pastoral spouses in recognition of their sacrifice and commitment to God's



Revival & REFORMATION

work. Nevertheless, the needs are still significant.

"In each crisis the Lord has strengthened the faith of our people and has rewarded our efforts far beyond our expectations," says Pastor Aldo Joel Pérez, Cuban Union President. "We ask our world membership and leadership to pray for our church in Cuba and for the mission entrusted to us." 🙏

—by Alfredo Garcia-Marenko, editorial assistant of *Elder's Digest* for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Tabitha B. C. Abel, DrPH, is an adjunct faculty member, Treasure Valley Community College, Ontario, Oregon, United States.



Preventing child sexual abuse in our churches

Churches need to be concerned about the sexual abuse of children, especially when it happens within their doors. Tragically, children have even been abused by pastors themselves.¹ How can churches protect the children in their midst? How can they identify perpetrators before anything happens? How can they avoid the pain that follows child sexual abuse?

There can be no short-term positive outcomes when sexual abuse of children happens in a church setting. Treasurers will consider the financial cost of such an incidence happening on church property or during a church-sponsored activity, and lawyers may consider the long-reaching ramifications as the church's name is dragged through the law courts and court of public opinion. Counselors will deal with pain and heartache. Pastors will focus on the spiritual fallout that inevitably occurs when child molestation happens and Satan, again, wreaks havoc in the church.

Protecting children in church-sponsored activities

The concerns are valid, and church leaders and the officers of Adventist Risk Management are trying to get ahead of the problem by developing standards and workshops for those working with children on and off campus. These include volunteer staff working in

Pathfinder clubs, children's Sabbath School divisions, camp meetings, and denominational schools. Elders, deacons, and other personnel who do not specifically work with children are also required to attend these workshops, which are designed to keep children safe. Some conferences are slow to institute these programs, while others are advanced in their planning and execution, and attendance has become second nature to all helpers.

Volunteers are also required to sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct stating that they will abide by 11 specific safety requirements and allow a criminal background check.² The code of conduct requires adults in charge of children to never be left alone with a child and to always interact with children where the activity becomes fully visible. This protects children from abuse and protects volunteers from false allegations and their consequences, which can be ruinous. Unfortunately, in signing compliance to all the requirements, signees are unlikely able to comply with all the rules 100 percent of the time, despite their best intentions. Undoubtedly, volunteers cannot be fully aware of all of the laws pertaining to reporting child abuse in their state or country because the laws are updated frequently; nevertheless, helpers must sign the agreement in order to volunteer. This can be of concern to those who are scrupulous in their practice of truthfulness.

We find it unlikely that a pedophile in the congregation will be on a convicted sex offender list in the United States, as only 3 percent of child sexual abusers are convicted. The other 97 percent are not convicted, usually for lack of evidence, and are therefore unidentifiable,³ but screening volunteers may stop those predisposed to interfering with a child from being allowed to volunteer. But there remains a greater danger from those who have yet to offend and those who have not been convicted of child sexual abuse.

What makes it worse is that only 10 to 13 percent of all child molestations are reported to the authorities. The church, however, should be commended for instituting requirements to keep our children safe. Many church employees are required by law to report suspicious sexual behaviors and child abuse to the local police department or Child Protective Services, as regulated by their state or country's courts.

The value of a child

God's first instruction to Adam and Eve was to make families. Children were an integral part of His plan and were to be loved, cared for, and taught God's laws. The Bible records the value placed on children. In Psalm 127:3, 5 we read that "Children are a heritage from the LORD. . . / Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them" (NKJV). Children are a blessing. One distinctive

characteristic of God's chosen people was that they were not to sacrifice their children to Molech or Baal (Deut. 18:10; Jer. 19:5) as did the neighboring nations. God detested this behavior. Sadly His people were not always obedient to God's command.

Jesus reprimanded His disciples for telling mothers not to bring their children to Him to bless them because blessing children was important to Jesus (Matt. 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17). Another proof reflecting His attitude was bringing Jairus's 12-year-old daughter back to life (Mark 5:22–24, 35–42; Luke 8:41, 42, 49–56). In most cultures today, children are cherished. They are an investment, a heritage, and our future. They are quick to forgive, ready to trust, and generous in love. Jesus says, " 'But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck' " (Matt. 18:6, *The Message*).

Many people, today, still advocate death, imprisonment with no opportunity of release, or even torture for child sexual abusers. Child sexual abusers are reviled, and even if the accused are found innocent in a court of law, many in society still judge them to be guilty. Those who use a child sexually or abuse a child physically or emotionally are deemed to be without a moral compass. We do not condone miscarriages of the law, but we state unequivocally that child abuse in any form should not be tolerated.

Pedophile or child molester?

Unfortunately, most news reports misinform the public when they use the term *child molester* interchangeably with *pedophile*. Someone who has molested a child is a child molester—but may or may not be a pedophile. A pedophile is a person (frequently a male), who feels sexually attracted to children. They can be concerned about their strange sexual attraction and intend never to act on it. Many will never do so, especially if

they get professional help. This sets up a conundrum for pedophiles who live where mandatory reporting laws inhibit minor-attracted people from obtaining the help they seek and need, and where discussing their attraction may result in their being ostracized, marginalized, and judged as a child molester.

Not all child molesters are, however, pedophiles. Child molesters may be malicious, sociopathic persons who seek their own pleasure with no care for the well-being of their quarry. All pedophiles do not become child molesters. However some, through lack of treatment and support, end up traveling down this dark road.

The dangerous road

What makes the difference is discussion both professionally and among people who are involved in this matter. The three levels—attraction, arousal, and action—are now recognized, and the opportunity to intervene between attraction and action becomes essential to prevent child sexual abuse.

Youth are curious, and curiosity about human sexuality would be no exception. At family gatherings, in Pathfinder clubs, at church socials, and at home when parents are out, innocent "playing doctor" games can be the incidents that ignite unhealthy sexual behaviors in the susceptible child. Youth who are at least five years older than their victim may intentionally play with children inappropriately, giving the child pleasurable feelings of sexual stimulation that can lead the child into requesting further pleasure and mixed emotional turbulence.

A sadistic perpetrator may manipulate a situation to their advantage and go into deeper darkness and be unable to control what happens. This frequently results in more children being sexually abused. The victim, too, may become an abuser in the future, which leans toward explaining molestation as a learned behavior and not a sexual orientation gone awry. Whatever the case, what started as possibly innocent curiosity for some can start the spiral into depression, fear, self-loathing, isolation, and

suicide for the perpetrator and cause untold emotional damage to a child.

Girls are molested more frequently than boys, but boys are less likely to report an adult or older teen molesting them. There are three main reasons for

*Youth are curious,
and curiosity
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this: (1) they fear that they are homosexual if the perpetrator is male, (2) they are less likely to believe that what was done to them was abuse, and (3) boys are taught to be "macho" and not easily emotionally upset.

The public is generally unaware of the facts about pedophilia. Pedophiles are as varied as the population in which they live and not likely to be vagrants luring children at the park or on their walk between school and home. They are usually caring men, more often than women, who are good with kids and liked by children. They are great teachers, social workers, pediatricians, and parents. They can be friends' relatives, storekeepers, and coaches. According to researchers, 5 to 10 percent of the adult male population are pedophiles, with the majority not being exclusively sexually attracted to children.⁴ They may be in long-term marriages or relationships with people of the opposite (or the same) gender, and pedophilia is their secondary sexual attraction. Their attraction is usually to children of a specific gender and in a specific age range.

Grooming is the process whereby perpetrators gain the confidence of their

prey and advance slowly from acceptable to unacceptable behaviors. It may start innocently with the perpetrator being a genuine friend of the child's family or the child, but over time the relationship changes. Alternatively, he may look for a boy who would be unlikely to be believed by his family or would be unlikely to tell anyone. Such children are at risk.

But what can parents do when their teen does not advance past being attracted to 10-year-olds? That was normal behavior when they were 10 or 12 years old, but now, at the age of 16, this activity becomes unacceptable, weird, confusing, and even frightening. Do they have a child molester in their house who may be placed in juvenile detention? Are their other children at risk? What will colleagues say, or people at church, or their friends? What about the pedophile who has a spouse and three children and holds a position on the church school board? What about a Pathfinder staff member or a pastoral team member? What will happen if they reveal their need for help, even though they have not acted on their attraction?

They may believe that their best option would be to remain quiet and hope it goes away or to commit suicide before they do anything that hurts a child or brings shame on their family. No one will understand how disgusted they are with themselves. They believe that the hatred they incur would be deserved. They are alone.

All have sinned

Christians are familiar with the verse, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, NIV). This comes as an inclusive statement. No one and no sin should be listed as unforgivable. No one, therefore, can say they do not need Christ's forgiveness and grace, whether their sin is immodesty, anger, lying, stealing, gluttony, adultery, gossiping, murder, homosexual behavior, or acting on a pedophilic orientation.⁵ Sin is sin, and everyone needs a Savior. Jesus' saving grace happens for all sinners. He brings hope to everyone, though

often that is not the message heard by non-offending pedophiles.

Would-be molesters are unlikely to believe that God loves them when the Christian community becomes closed to hearing their cry for help before they commit a crime. This behavior confirms their worst fears and makes many suicidally hopeless. The action of others makes them more fearful and isolated from society, which increases the risk of them acting on their attraction.

Be a part of the solution

Should Christians view those who voice that they are tempted to sexually abuse a child as though they have already acted on their sinful inclination? Having a sexual attraction to children may not be a sin; but acting on that attraction is. Christians can be the first to acknowledge the difference and the need for more knowledge and understanding and have an open discussion. These matters should no longer be avoided or ignored. At a time when society demands tolerance in all matters, child abuse seems to still be the exception. This is one of few situations where our tolerant culture will tolerate intolerance.

With this in mind, Christians can start taking steps toward protecting our children and helping those with a pedophilic orientation, no matter how the innate behavior developed. With growing understanding, Christians can help non-offending pedophiles find professional help and no longer ostracize them. We know that sharing their attraction with even one trusted person significantly lessens the chances of a pedophile acting on their attraction.

By discussing the topic of child abuse with an open mind, pastors are taking an important first step. The following actions can help pave the way for further understanding of the problems we face in reaching out to minor-attracted persons before they act on their attraction:

1. Host workshops provided by church leaders about child safety, and institute the plans fully.

2. Invite professionals, or someone versed in the behavior and management of pedophilia, to discuss pedophilia with parents, spouses, and compassionate individuals who have an interest in helping this despised population.
3. Encourage a compassionate, understanding spirit in all levels of church leadership so that a self-disclosing, non-offending pedophile will receive intelligent, Christlike support and help in connecting with specialized professional help and resources.
4. Institute safety policies so that non-offending pedophiles can attend church-sponsored programs with a prevention partner (spouse, confidant), even though they have not committed a crime, to protect them from unfair accusations while protecting our children.
5. Educate youth leaders, summer camp staff, Pathfinder staff, children's ministries staff, school teachers, and others who work with youth about pedophilia and how to recognize young people who have a pedophilic attraction.
6. Pray for wisdom in working for the safety of our children and the souls of non-offending pedophiles. 

1 Cf. Samantha Nelson, "Choosing Grace: Forgiveness Restores a Broken Relationship," *Outlook* (April 2017), 6. Samantha Nelson is CEO of The Hope of Survivors, a ministry for victims of clergy sexual abuse. She and her pastor husband serve in the Rocky Mountain Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

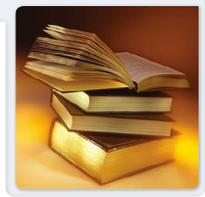
2 See, for example, the Volunteer Background Check Form of the Oregon Conference, which includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church Ministry Volunteer Code of Conduct, March 2016, on page 3 orgcriskmanagement.netadvent.org/uploaded_assets/287066. (accessed: July 2016).

3 Joan Tabachnick and Alisa Klein, *A Reasoned Approach: Reshaping Sex Offender Policy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse* (Beaverton, OR: Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers [ATSA], 2011), www.atsa.com/pdfs/ppReasonedApproach.pdf, 19.

4 Sarah D. Goode, "How many paedophiles are there?" in *Understanding and Addressing Adult Sexual Attraction to Children: A Study of Paedophiles in Contemporary Society* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 14–20.

5 Tabitha B. C. Abel, *Untouchable: Reaching the Most Despised With God's Love* (Charleston, SC: The Association for Sexual Abuse Prevention, 2017), 98, 126–143.

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Hope for the Same-Sex Attracted: Biblical Direction for Friends, Family Members, and Those Struggling with Homosexuality

by Ron Citlau, Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2017.

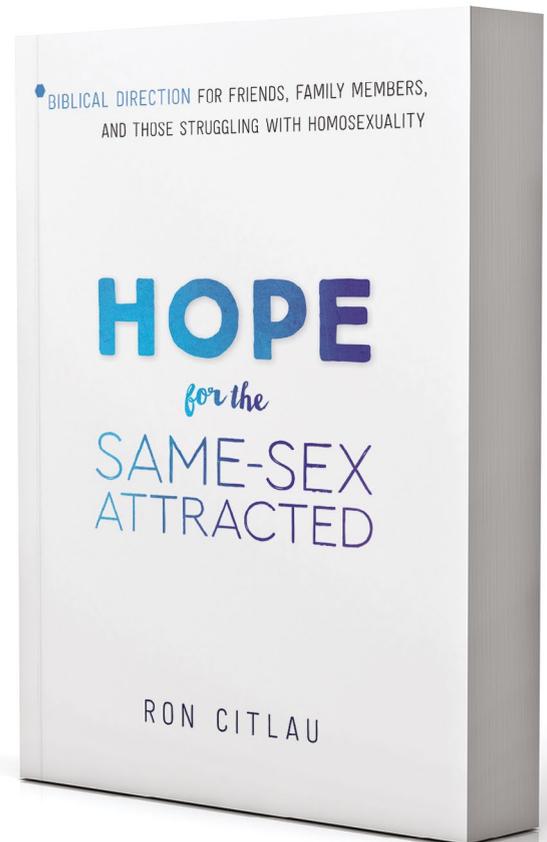
Hope for the Same-Sex Attracted is a practical and pastoral application of biblical principles on the subject of homosexuality for those who believe that Scripture, correctly interpreted, prohibits homosexual behavior. Those struggling with homosexuality, as well as those who minister to them, will find in these pages clear guidelines, written with the sensibility of one who has struggled with same-sex attraction but has experienced healing and transformation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The author, Ron Citlau, successfully navigates the intersection between compassion and faithfulness to Scripture.

The book consists of two parts. Part one discusses three obstacles that keep same-sex attracted individuals from experiencing true healing. These obstacles include the acceptance of gay identity, gay marriage, and what he calls the “spiritual friendship movement.” Gay identity, he asserts, opens the door for sin, whether intentionally or unintentionally (18), arguing that the Bible does not “give us permission to identify ourselves in terms of our sinful desires, inclinations, or activities” (20).*

Similarly, he argues that gay marriage robs those struggling with same-sex attraction of the transformation available to them in Christ. This seems to be because marriage, sexuality, and the family point beyond themselves (31) to the Triune God in ways that same-sex marriage will obscure. The gender difference between man and woman shapes the different roles and functions in the family, and this is “intrinsic to the

very fabric of our humanity,” not just a cultural thing (32). This gender difference and marital oneness reflect the distinctiveness of the members of the Godhead (33) and their mystical unity.

In part two, Citlau discusses the roles of the local congregation and the small groups within those congregations, the “healing communities” as he calls them, as well as the role of Bible-believing Christian therapists (74) in helping same-sex attracted individuals to experience “healing and transformation” (19). Such congregations, he argues, must be those that “love the Scriptures and point everyone to the living Christ” (59). This healing differs from reversion therapies, as Citlau maintains we are all in need of the healing that can only come from the truth of the gospel. He emphasizes the effectiveness of small groups that provide, among other things, a context for confidentiality (62). The goal is to lead persons struggling with same-sex attraction to experience healing and transformation. He emphasizes that healing may not mean the recovery of heterosexual attraction nor may it always lead to heterosexual marriage. Healing may involve singleness with celibacy, which should be seen as a biblically sanctioned option for those who seek to remain faithful to Scripture. Throughout the book, Citlau shares multiple stories of people who have



experienced the kinds of healing and transformation that he describes. I highly recommend this work.

—Reviewed by **Gilbert O. Ojwang, PhD**, associate professor of biblical studies and languages, Oakwood University, Huntsville, Alabama, United States. 

* The position of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary is, “It should be emphasized, however, that the biblical materials condemn homosexual *practice*, but there is no castigation of innate homosexual *orientation per se*.” See Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, “An Understanding of the Biblical View on Homosexual Practice and Pastoral Care,” position paper voted on October 9, 2015, www.andrews.edu/sem/about/statements/seminary-statement-on-homosexuality-edited-10-8-15-jm-final.pdf.

► Adventist churches minister to single mothers

Tortola, British Virgin Islands— On the small Caribbean island of Tortola, four Seventh-day Adventist congregations came together to offer free car washes for single mothers in their communities. Church members connected with 25 mothers and their families by contacts in the community and through social media announcements.

Pastor **Howard Simon**, district pastor on Tortola, was enthusiastic about the chance the church had to meet many members of the neighborhood. “It was an opportunity to let them know they are cared for by the body of Christ,” said Simon. “Our faith finds its most compelling expression in the everyday words and

actions of Christians in their communities. It’s about total membership involvement.”

Several of the single mothers were heartened to know that the church wished to serve them and shared their contact information, expressing an interest in future ministry efforts. “We are usually among the ones who are left out, and I am extremely [glad] that the church is thinking about us,” said **Miss Lettsome**, a satisfied recipient of the free car wash initiative. “It was an uplifting experience.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Church on Tortola, Virgin Gorda, and Anegada in the British Virgin Islands is an active



Photo credit: North Caribbean Conference

body of believers worshiping in eight congregations. This effort is one way in which members have been embracing the Total Member Involvement initiative emphasized by the Adventist World Church and the Lord Transform Me initiative led by the Inter-American Division this quinquennium. [Royston Philbert/Inter-American Division staff]

► Gospel worker, suspected spy, empowers women and wins confidence

Beirut, Lebanon—When **Rihab*** arrived in a village in North Africa as a Global Mission pioneer, she noticed the village was overflowing with mistrust and antagonism between clans. Wanting to connect with the women, Rihab started a community project with three women from one of the families. However, the issue of enmity between groups hindered her work because the clans did not want to work together.

Although Rihab tried to work with each of the clans equally, they were jealous of her time. She felt hopeless when she did not have a single opportunity to share the gospel. “That situation taught me to watch my steps,” said Rihab. “You don’t know what you might encounter around the corner in your field.”

Rihab was discouraged, but she did not give up. She left the village

for spiritual refreshing through prayer and reading the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Two months later, she came back to the town full of God’s assurance.

Rihab, an indigenous Adventist pioneer raised in a Muslim home, invited young women from all the clans to start having Sabbath-morning meetings at her house, and during weekdays she ran a language and music club for women. Everything was going well until many of Rihab’s friends suddenly stopped coming to her activities.

“I heard the rumor that I was a Christian spy funded by Israel and America,” said Rihab. With prayer and fasting, Rihab ignored the rumors and continued to serve the women in the village through visitation, mentoring, prayer, and teaching.

Not wanting a Christian in their village, the people in the community

gathered at the local mosque to discuss whether Rihab should stay. Because of her passion for the people and her good deeds in the village, some people advocated for her to stay. However, Rihab was reported to the authorities in the region and investigated for her religion and methods of conversion.

After a Sabbath morning meeting, Rihab’s friend showed her a red fruit in the wooded mountain. As Rihab tasted it, she felt God had guided her to discover the fruit. After researching it online, she found this fruit was good for making jam.

Using this information, Rihab began teaching a woman, one who needed to be self-reliant and gain confidence, how to make jam using the fruit from the mountains. The woman produced 354 jars of organic jam within two weeks,



and many markets in the region wanted to sell her product.

“In a few days, the news spread rapidly,” said Rihab. “It gave me opportunities to connect with more people than before, even outside of the town.”

Local authorities expressed gratitude to Rihab, and the people in the

community began to trust her as their friend and mentor.

“A man told me, ‘Ma’am, don’t worry. Be strong and courageous. We accept you wherever you are from,’ ” said Rihab.

Rihab now has confidence that this opportunity is a tool for witnessing.

“God gave these golden opportunities for me to preach the love of Jesus through living examples for this community,” said Rihab. [Chanmin Chung | Middle East and North Africa Union]

**Name has been changed*

► Total Children Involvement evangelism takes Kenya by storm.

Photo credit: Hope Channel



Nairobi, Kenya—Total Member Involvement (TMI) is already a reality in Kenya, said **Ramon Canals**, a TMI coordinator with the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference. Church members are so enthusiastic about TMI that they have created subcategories. In an illustration of TCI (Total Children Involvement), children at a local Adventist school have sprung into action to assist needy children at a larger public school.

“The students of the Adventist school, supported by parents and teachers, went to the public school, bringing a bus loaded with uniforms, clothes, and food for the needy children,” said Canals, who accompanied the children to the school. “Then they stayed for a few hours on the public school campus, interacting with the children. Every Adventist student was encouraged to make one new friend

from the public school, learn their names, and pray with them. It was a touching sight.”

Another group of children, from the New Life Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi, have spent time befriending street children housed at the Joseph Kangethe Boys Rehabilitation Center.

Sarah Wekesa, the church’s director of children’s ministries, said in an interview with Hope Channel, “We acknowledge that every member of the church, including children, must be involved in God’s work.”

Canals said he has also heard of

TYI (Total Youth Involvement), TWI (Total Women Involvement), and TPI (Total Pastor Involvement). “As you can see, they are having fun with the TMI concept, and more important, they are making it a reality to impact people’s lives for eternity,” he said.

Adventist Church president **Ted N. C. Wilson** said, “It is amazing how the Holy Spirit is inspiring lay members to do so many things in TMI,” Wilson said. “I love all the derivatives of TMI. This is fantastic and an indication of the Holy Spirit’s leading and guiding.”

“I praise the Lord because church members in Kenya are moving TMI to a new level,” Canals said. “In the process, they are bringing hope to the hopeless.” [Andrew McChesney | Adventist Mission]

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Michael E. Hall, PhD, is a private counseling psychology practitioner residing in Charlotte, North Carolina, United States.



Practical solutions for pastoral marriage stress

A cartoon strip portrays a disgruntled couple seated in front of a marriage counselor's desk. The caption reads: "I thought I married an ideal. Later, I realized I got a raw deal. Now, I want a new deal." As seminary and early ministry yield to the reality of incessant ministry demands, pastors, too, may wish for a "new deal" from the tolls ministry puts on marriage and family.

I interviewed Bill Roberts, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church, Norwood, North Carolina, and his wife of 28 years, Lisa.

Michael Hall (MH): Please describe for *Ministry* readers your recollection of the most stressful season of your pastoral family life.

Lisa Roberts (LR): We were married seven years before Bill, miserable in his previous job, realized his call to ministry.

Bill Roberts (BR): Up until then, we were very involved in our church—youth choir, Bible study.

LR: But all that changed when he first entered the seminary. He was going to and from classes and working a forty-hour job on weekends. When he received a student appointment at a church, we stopped attending "our church," and I started accompanying him on assignments.

BR: During the first seven or eight years of ministry, I became the proverbial "all things to all people" pastor. I was so absorbed, I made no time for [spiritual] growth. Isolation resulted. This became the driest time of my ministry. I wasn't being [spiritually] fed, so I wasn't feeding others. It became a difficult time for our marriage, too, as I shut out Lisa. It was awful.

LR: For me, initially, I saw myself as not cut out to be a minister's wife.

MH: There was Bill's call to ministry, but that did not equate to Lisa's call to Bill's ministry.

LR: Yeah. It eventually took some therapy for me to come to grips with the real demands asked of me as a clergy wife. I sought a professional counselor—what relief! This led to a few [marriage-focused] sessions with Bill.

Also, I was invited to attend a clergy-spouse group, sponsored by our denominational conference. Having my negative feelings affirmed was healing. These "sisters"—pastoral spouses were nearly all wives then—also shared practical coping strategies.

MH: What do you most want fellow ministry couples to take away from your clergy marriage experience?

LR: I had to learn that it's OK to say no to Bill and no to church demands. This is not the same as saying no to Jesus!

BR: I've really grown spiritually being married to Lisa. Pastors, let your non-clergy spouse pastor you! Great wisdom has come when I've shut up and listened as Lisa witnessed to me. My best times—in life and ministry—have resulted, as Jesus drew me closer to Himself as I allowed Lisa to pour into my life."

Commentary

Bill and Lisa's early marriage struggle mirrors that of many other couples. Echoing research findings across various denominations, a 2014 study of Seventh-day Adventist pastoral families in North America found major stressors associated with issues of "pastoral roles, expectations, and *family life*" (emphasis added). Specifically, more than seven out of

ten pastors and spouses surveyed registered "at least a mild concern" with family life issues such as the negative impact of congregational demands on marital relations and disruption of family time.¹

Best-practice for couples: Prioritize marital intimacy

Couples like the Robertses can avoid sliding into full-fledged stress reactions (i.e., fight-or-flight living) by prioritizing marital intimacy. Proverbs 18:22 contains a marital enrichment strategy: "Find a good spouse, you find a good life—even more: the favor of God!" Proverbs 18:22 (*The Message*).

Good spouse. "Find a good spouse" may be seen as a directive for spouses to accentuate each other's most attractive features. In other words, "Find the good in your spouse!" To initiate the discovery process, a couple designates private time and space to exchange what is most appealing about their spouse. Consider instituting weekly state-of-our-union discussions (one-hour maximum), or make this the table talk topic of a date night.² Here are some dialogue starters:

- Husband and wife: "I chose you as my 'forever partner' for the following three primary reasons."
- "God wants us to be 'forever mates' for the following three reasons, ultimately."

Remember this is a *journey of discovery*; it is not an inquisition based on past failures or present needs. Be curious. Learn new aspects of each other's perceptions. The power lies in the meaning each spouse attaches to each reason.

Good life. Good (Hebrew: *tov*) has been translated “working the way it’s supposed to.” Select a time and private venue where the sole objective includes, for the two of you, reminiscing about your “good life” together. This is an opportunity to venture into a discovery or confirmation of your God-purposed marriage. Alternate sharing candid answers to the following:³

- “The three beatitudes most often reflected in our marriage are _____, _____, and _____.”

(Describe separate instances where each beatitude was powerfully portrayed.)

- “The three beatitudes that might enhance our marriage are _____, _____, and _____.”

(Describe the possible benefits associated with each beatitude.)

God’s favor. Propagation of a spirit-filled marriage is the desired outcome. Try these dynamic dialogue starters:

- “Our marriage produces mostly the following three fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23): _____,

_____, and _____.”
(Describe a stand-out memory of each fruit’s juiciest production in your marriage.)

- “Our marriage may benefit from increased production of the following three fruits of Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23): _____, _____, and _____.”

(Describe your vision of the marriage when each fruit is in abundant harvest.)

Couple’s tov pledge. The introspection and exploration of love that epitomizes the “good spouse,” “good life,” and “God’s favor” phases of couple dialogue is capped in a separate time called *Tov* (Good) Pledge. As much a prayer as a declaration, we find it vital that both spouses “hear what the Spirit saith” (Rev. 2:7) about their marriage. At least monthly, a state-of-our-marriage meeting should be devoted to heartfelt intercessory prayer by each mate for Heaven’s anointing on the couple. A sample utterance is:

“Before the Living God, we consecrate ourselves to a ‘good marriage.’

Individually and as a couple we humbly seek the approbation of Heaven.

By Your goodness, Father, we hereby resolve to continue . . .

By Your mercy, Jesus, we hereby resolve to avoid (eliminate) . . .

By Your power, Holy Spirit, we hereby resolve to begin.”

“Let each [husband and wife] give love rather than exact it. Cultivate that which is noblest in yourselves, and be quick to recognize the good qualities in each other. The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims.”⁴

Marriage *tov*

Bill and Lisa Roberts’s candid confession illustrates how marital intimacy re-prioritized is worth the effort invested. Marriage enrichment seminars and couple counseling are two marital intimacy best practices.

Seminary and ministry development leaders: Clergy self-care and marriage care

The author interviewed **Ira L. Lake, PhD, MDiv**, who, after nearly 20 years of parish ministry as an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor, now offers pastoral counseling throughout southern California, specializing in marriage and family enrichment, family court mediation, and bereavement counseling.

Michael Hall (MH): Dr. Lake, contemporary research cites seminary and continuing ministerial education as central players in building a more robust pastorate. Speak to this need for multifaceted education in the area of pastoral self-care, including healthy intimate relationships.

Ira Lake (IL): Reflection upon my own ministry education and training,

conversations with fellow clergy, and evidence from my counseling practice all suggest this is, indeed, a time of revival and reformation among ministry educators.

Some first-tier seminaries utilize the results of psychological-vocational appraisals to affirm a call to ministry and evaluate applicants’ general mental health and readiness for graduate school. Premarital partners and spouses are increasingly being incorporated into the seminary orientation process. Beyond the cursory “welcome,” spouses and ministry students participate in relational health assessments, as measured by marital-family functioning. The resulting “map” of their

relationship genome (i.e., motivated strengths, emerging growth edges, and identifiable weaknesses) leads to the formulation of couple-directed learning goals for their participation in mandatory or elected marriage education initiatives offered conjointly by the university counseling service and seminary. Early outcome studies show these “specialized services” are more fully subscribed, as seminarians are less inclined to access general services. This approach is quite sustainable in environments where wellness, in contrast to illness prevention, is the prevailing health value.

MH: What role should continuing ministerial education and

organizational leaders play in pastoral self-care and marriage care?

IL: While there's great variability depending upon the structure of the employing organization (e.g., conference, synod, presbytery), three emerging trends in pastoral development are particularly promising:

Whole-pastor development. Historically, seminary education encompassed theological and practical ministry preparation, with the research indicating an emphasis on the former. Ministerial services, by contrast, favor the latter. Progressive seminaries and pastoral development entities are adopting more systemic, or whole-person, approaches. That means they provide resources that strengthen the contextual world of the minister: *intrapersonal*—how a pastor connects to self, *interpersonal*—how a pastor connects with significant others, and *extra-personal*—how the pastor

connects with the external world (i.e., congregation, community, cosmos, and Creator).

Pastoral self-care. Pastoral self-care is slowly but steadily gaining momentum. For example, administrative organizations are considering shortening the service requirement for sabbatical eligibility (e.g., from seven years to three to five years) and extending the length of sabbaticals from the traditional three months to six months. Mandatory physical fitness attestations or examinations and proof of fidelity in personal finances may become pro forma.

Marital care. Special clergy marriage and family enrichment events are appearing on the training horizon with increasing frequency. Alternatively, counseling packages of eight to ten sessions (versus one-off TED Talk type events) are available with Christian

therapists trained to help so-called distressed marriages and to enrich “good” ones. When presented as “wellness benefits” rather than as “treatment of illnesses,” these innovative services are received with enthusiasm. 

- 1 D. Sedlacek, D. McBride, and R. Drumm, “Seminary Training, Role Demands, Family Stressors, and Strategies for Alleviation of Stressors in Pastors’ Families” (unpublished paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary: Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2014).
- 2 Additional exercises are found in John M. Gottman and Nan Silver, “Principle 2: Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration” and “Principle 3: Turn Toward Each Other Instead of Away” in *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country’s Foremost Relationship Expert* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 61–98.
- 3 For more question and answer strategies, see Jed Jurchenko, *131 Creative Conversations for Couples: Christ-Honoring Questions to Deepen Your Relationship, Grow Your Friendship, and Kindle Romance* (self-published, 2016).
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 361.

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