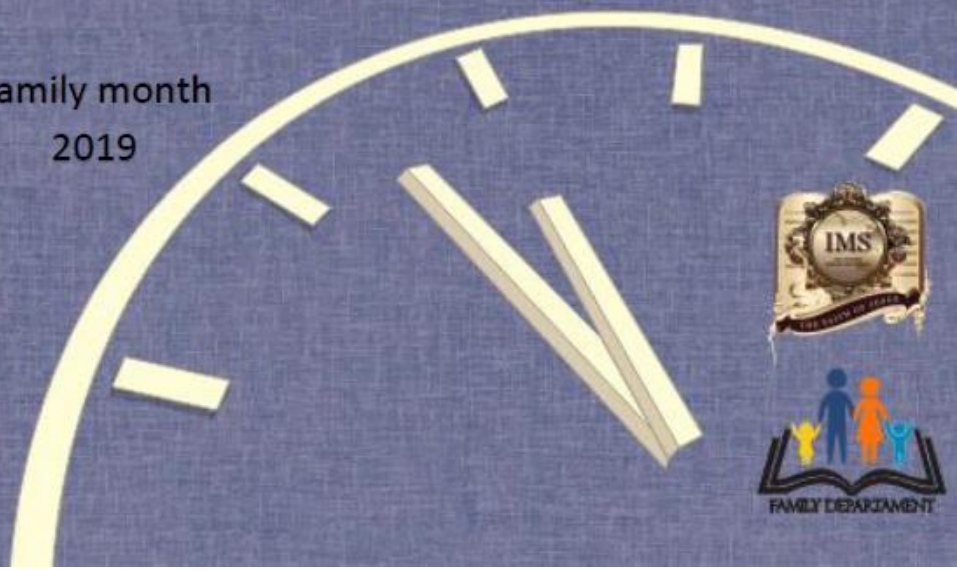




THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY TIME

Family month
2019



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION ----- | 3 |
| TIME TO START AGAIN ----- | 5 |
| Saturday, May 04, 2019 Antonino di Franca - Italy | |
| TIME TO ENRICH OUR MARRIAGE ----- | 14 |
| Friday, May 10, 2019 Ciro Arévalo - USA | |
| TIME FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY ----- | 22 |
| Saturday, May 11, 2019 Adalácio Fontes - Portugal | |
| TIME FOR GOD AND HIS WORD ----- | 30 |
| Sunday, May 12, 2019 Pablo Hunger - USA | |
| TIME FOR INTIMACY IN THE FAMILY ----- | 39 |
| Saturday, May 18, 2019 Julio Sandoya - Brasil | |
| TIME FOR HEALTH IN THE FAMILY ----- | 45 |
| Saturday, May 25, 2019 Roland de La Paz - Filipines | |

INTRODUCTION

I have heard a poem where one of the choruses said, "Time asked the time, how long time has ..." The poem is an abstract representation that leads the reader or listener to think about the value of time and how it should be used. The word of God warns that "all things have their appointed time, and there is a time for all purpose under heaven." Ecclesiastes 3: 1

We live in a time where things are done with an absurd speed, where the change of information is instantaneous; new books, new music, new news, new movies that are offered in a surreal way, and we still have the dangerous addiction of social networks, where we make real-time posts of a supposed happiness to receive likes; people's lives turn out to be a live broadcast.

Supposedly, time was meant to be better used, but unfortunately it is not so, for people still continue to think that time is an inexhaustible resource and that it can be employed in any way, living a malignant and pernicious procrastination.

The inspired writer wrote, "Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time." Christ's Object Lessons, 342.

In this family month, the themes revolve around the importance of prioritizing part of our time to strengthen our family ties; it is necessary to dedicate quality time to our family.

Stop, think and ask yourself: How much time do I spend on my family? Quality time is the expression that indicates a period devoted exclusively to a person or persons of the family. In order to have a close and trusting relationship, it is necessary to make this kind of investment (application), to meet the need for the attention of the wife or husband, to play with the children, to give affection, to dialogue, to create the good memories in the familiar mind, and this is only possible through an

interpersonal relationship, which demands of each of us time, during that time we will touch, embrace, kiss, laugh, etc.

Inspired thinking says, “We are admonished to redeem the time. But time squandered can never be recovered. We cannot call back even one moment. The only way in which we can redeem our time is by making the most of that which remains, by being co-workers with God in His great plan of redemption.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 342.

We live in a very dangerous time for our families, so it is time to prioritize the physical, intellectual and spiritual security of our families; we must make our families “a little heaven upon earth, a place where the affections are cultivated... love, sympathy, and true courtesy to one another.” The Adventist Home, 15.

This month we will study beautiful subjects in which we will find advice and teachings that will help us to develop habits of good use of time so that we can devote time to some of the most revealing aspects of the family; May the Lord bless us all and may our families be light for this dark world.

Pr. Wesley A. Gomes

Saturday, May 04, 2019

TIME TO START AGAIN

Antonino Di Franca - Italy

In paradise, where everything was "very good", the Lord saw that it was not the best thing for the man to be alone. Instead of a single individual, He considered it better to have a partner who could not only understand, respect, help and love each other, but also procreate and populate the earth of other intelligent and loving beings. As the Scriptures report, He created both of them and united them in marriage, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24. Being both in the image of God, they lived so happy in Eden, that they enjoyed mutual understanding between them, with God and with nature.

"God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. "Marriage is honorable" (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 46).

That happy living would have continued indefinitely if sin had not intervened, ruining the atmosphere of mutual understanding and service. Disobedience brought serious changes in human nature with imbalance and disharmony in the individual and matrimonial life, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Genesis

3:16. However, despite the conditions had changed, the Lord did not tell Adam to leave his wife or the wife to leave her husband. Faulty and changed by their sin, they should continue to appreciate love, respect and harmony as God had set it. Considering this divine relationship, even centuries later, Jesus restated: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:6. When He stated these words, sin had already caused much infidelity, lack of confidence and misunderstandings, but His words still set our course of action.

Love, Problems and Solutions in Old Marriages

The Lord has not only conceived marriage in terms of friendship and procreation; even when the spouses respect each other, they love with tenderness and seek with all their hearts mutual happiness, in God's plan, it is a school of life and faith. Jacob loved Rachel tenderly to the point that he served seven years to receive her as a wife (Genesis 29:20); despite this, the marriage had some problems because Rachel could not have children and this made her very unhappy (Genesis 30:1-2). The same happened in the marriage between Elkanah and Hannah, Samuel's parents. Elkanah loved her sincerely, and had special attention for her (1 Samuel 1:5), but his love was not all for Hannah because she could not have children, and this was reason enough to make her unhappy (1:7-8). The same problem is found in another marriage, between the great patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarai. She was a beautiful woman (Genesis 12:11), but she had the same great difficulty as previous women, she was barren and had no children (11:30) and this did not make her happy (16:1-2).

In these three cases, the husbands had no responsibility for the problems of their wives and, despite their wishes, with all their love and affection, they could not have influence and could not change the condition of the spouses. It was really a severe trial for all of them, and only the Lord could help them. They waited for a long time until the

promise came that Sarai would have a son (17:15-19), and that was the case in her old age (21:1-3). Rachel also prayed to the Lord, and He heard her voice giving her the desire of her heart (30:22-24; 35: 15-18). The same thing happened with Hannah, she waited, prayed, wept, and even made a vow (1 Samuel 1:8, 10-12), and the divine fulfillment was granted to her in due course(1 Samuel 1:20). In none of these cases was it a question of problems between husband and wife, on matters of mentality, behavior or character, but it was with faith, earnest prayer and steadiness that they found the solution. If that difficult physiological problem had a happy solution, can we expect minor problems to have a positive result? The promise is: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." What will He do in our trial? "With the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

Findings and Disappointments

After a long wait to find the life partner, it takes time to get to know each other. When this stage also ends, the time for the wedding is set, and finally, after all the preparations, the day comes when the spouses are among their guests, all of them expressing the best wishes. In such festive atmosphere and wedding party gifts, several couples begin married life with rosy expectations. It is a completely new life, and they conceive that it will always be full of tenderness, understanding and joy. For a certain number of days or weeks, this may also be the case, but then, little by little, things start to change. The husband and the wife find between them differences of mentality and customs, possible problems of temper and flaws of character that they did not know previously. It is a bitter surprise, a disappointment, and a possible cause of perplexity and mutual indifference.

It is a sensitive situation, which people face in different ways. Some begin to become pessimistic about the future, and aim at such

weaknesses, without considering their own shortcomings. Others see the negative traits of the spouse so much without considering that he or she also has very positive abilities. Is it possible to find solutions while we only see the flaw of the other and do not consider that we also have our weakness and need understanding? The Spirit of Prophecy writes:

“This is a most critical period in their experience. The happiness and usefulness of their whole future life depend upon their taking a right course now. Often they discern in each other unsuspected weaknesses and defects; but the hearts that love has united will discern excellencies also heretofore unknown. Let all seek to discover the excellencies rather than the defects. Often it is our own attitude, the atmosphere that surrounds ourselves, which determines what will be revealed to us in another.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 360

“If your dispositions are not congenial, would it not be for the glory of God for you to change these dispositions?” The Adventist Home, p. 345

“You must both study how you can assimilate, instead of differing, with one another.... The use of mild, gentle methods will make a surprising difference in your lives.” The Adventist Home, p. 345

Troublesome Marriages

Among our dear brothers and sisters, there are marriages with serious problems, because sometimes one spouse is in the faith and the other is not. Maybe this means disunity in many things because while the converted spouse loves the Lord and is willing to live according to Him, the unconverted follows the world and does not care about herself or her faith. These are truly delicate and painful cases where special heavenly help is needed.

Although some of these cases are very difficult, as believers we must not cherish the idea of abandoning the spouse. For such cases, many years ago, a precious inspired instruction was given: "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." 1 Corinthians 7:13. Why should not the believer leave the unbeliever? The servant of God answers: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." 1 Corinthians 7:14

Every follower of Christ will accept the will of God rather than his or her own conclusion, which can often be wrong. In all cases, referring to a situation in which the husband was the unbeliever, the Spirit of Prophecy gives the same advice.

"The husband and father is not a believer, and everything is made hard for the mother in the training of her children. The husband is a profane man, vulgar and abusive in his language to her, and he teaches the children to disregard her authority. When she is trying to pray with them, he will come in and make all the noise he can and break out into cursing God and heaping vile epithets upon the Bible. She is so discouraged that life is a burden to her. What good can she do? What benefit is it to her children for her to remain at home? She has felt an earnest desire to do some work in the Lord's vineyard and has thought that it might be best to leave her family rather than to remain while the husband and father is constantly teaching the children to disrespect and disobey her.

"In such cases my advice would be, Mothers, whatever trials you may be called to endure through poverty, through wounds and bruises of the soul, from the harsh, overbearing assumption of the husband and father, do not leave your children; do not give them up to the influence of a godless father. Your work is to counteract the work of the father..."
The Adventist Home, p. 348

Faithful and unfaithful

In cases not less painful than the above are those in which husband or wife break the marriage vow and betray the spouse. Problems like this or even worse happened in Israel even in biblical times. The prophet Malachi appealed to the hearts of these people when he wrote: "... the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." Malachi 2:14-16

The heart breaks when this happens among people who have not given their lives to the Lord, but it is a tragedy and bleeding of the heart if temptation blinds the spiritual eyes of a member of God's family, causing moral damage to himself, to the church, and great suffering for the spouse and children.

Those who profess to belong to the people of God and to "keep all of God's commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit... adultery, Sister White writes, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than is that of the classes I have named, who do not acknowledge the law of God as binding upon them. In a peculiar sense do those who profess to keep God's law dishonor Him and reproach the truth by transgressing its precepts." *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 450.

It is our wish and prayer that nobody falls at this point, but if, unfortunately, someone, husband or wife, has been overcome by temptation, that they humble themselves before God, that they repent

of their sin with pain and sorrow, and confess their sin, without trying to justify or assume an attitude of finding flaws in others. If the guilty repents with all his heart and gives evidence of his repentance, there is hope of forgiveness: "The time has come when Jerusalem is being searched as with lighted candles. God is at work investigating character, weighing moral worth, and pronouncing decisions on individual cases. It may not be too late for those who have sinned to be zealous and repent; "for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of..." *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 448

Jesus forgave the repentant woman who had been caught in the act and the Jews were ready to stone her, "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No my, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." John 8:10-11. He did not continue to accuse and condemn her, but He worked to heal the wound, just as the spouses should act in such cases to help the person recover.

"This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to God. In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she showed her gratitude for His forgiving mercy. For this erring woman the world had only contempt and scorn, but the Sinless One pitied her weakness and reached to her a helping hand...

"Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly

entangled in the snares of the enemy. With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 89

Sometimes, especially in critical circumstances, we reveal the attitude of blaming repeatedly for the mistake the other party made, but this is not spiritual help. A testimony says that, "A conscience once violated is greatly weakened. It needs the strength of constant watchfulness and unceasing prayer." (*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 199). Therefore, spouses, help their partner in this healing process, do not open the wound over and over again, but start a new experience with the help of the Lord with a spirit of forgiveness and love.

"Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven." *The Adventist Home*, p. 106

One of the greatest blessings

It is not only a gift from paradise, "Marriage, when joined with purity and holiness, truth and righteousness, is one of the greatest blessings ever given to the human family..." *In Heavenly Places*, p. 202. If so, you must also have the greatest respect and consideration as it is written in the New Testament, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Hebrews 13:4. As believers and members of the Lord's church, this is our ideal, and we shouldn't put it at risk under any circumstances.

"Jesus wants to see happy marriages", Sister White writes, "happy firesides. The warmth of true friendship and the love that binds the

hearts of husband and wife are a foretaste of heaven. God has ordained that there should be perfect love and perfect harmony between those who enter into the marriage relation. Let bride and bridegroom in the presence of the heavenly universe pledge themselves to love one another as God has ordained they should..." *In Heavenly Places*, p. 202

Many marriages are held every day, but not all are a daily blessing for both spouses. What does a happy marriage depend on? "Who can find a virtuous woman?" the wise man asks. "For her price is far above rubies." Proverbs 31:10 "...and a prudent wife is from the Lord." 19:14. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." 18:22. These verses refer to the good wife, and value her more than the pearls; actually the same is for the husband. The husband who finds a good woman achieves the favor of the Lord, and the wife who finds a good husband also obtains favor of the Lord, because in His eyes they are both precious jewels. Are we both such precious jewels? If not, how can we become? Let's not be self-centered, immersed in worries, let's not dwell on the weak sides of the consort, and not reveal them to others. Take Jesus as an example, as a friend and confidant. If we love as He loves, let us speak as He speaks, and act as He would act, living together with our spouse will not be a burden, but a true joy and happiness.

Friday, May 10, 2019

TIME TO ENRICH OUR MARRIAGE

Ciro Arévalo - USA

“Because to every purpose there is time..., therefore the misery of man is great upon him.” Ecclesiastes 8: 6

The Importance of Time

We are in a very accelerated modern society when it comes to time. The days, weeks and months pass by so quickly. It is amazing to see how fast time is advancing. It is very common nowadays to listen very often to the following expressions: I do not have enough time! I do not have time to spare!

In this modern society in which we find ourselves, mainly here in the United States, a large amount of people channel many of their hours into work. They leave early in the morning and return late at night; they arrive so tired, that they only want to eat something, bathe and go straight to bed, to gather strength for the next day's journey. Usually, this is an everyday routine.

This typical situation affects marriages and families. There is no time for family life. This routine does not help enrich our marriages and families. At this moment as I write this article, an experience of a father who didn't have time for his family comes to mind. This father had a young son who would asked him to play ball every day and usually it was when the father was going to work. The dad's response was always, "I do not have time son, I need to go to my work." After giving him this answer, he would give him an allowance to compensate him for the time

he couldn't give him. This situation was repeated every day. After several months, one morning the young son intercepted the father who was leaving for work and told him: "Daddy, I want you to stay with me today". The father's response came quickly and with a tone of impatience he said: I can't son! Can't you see I have to go to work? Can't you see that we need money to maintain this house? After hearing these comments, the child asked the father, "Daddy, how much money do you earn per day at work?" This question baffled the father and after a few seconds he told him the salary he made per day. Then the little boy quickly pulled out a piggy bank that he kept in his room and gave it to the father. Then he told him, "you know, I've been saving all the money you gave me, and I think there's a lot more in this piggy bank than you earn per day at work. I want you not to go to work today. I'll pay you so you're free and you can dedicate it to me. Do you accept my proposal? tell me yes! please! At that moment, the father was speechless and only looked at his little son, and tears began to roll down his cheeks. He knelt before him, hugged him and asked him to forgive him, promising that he would do everything possible to dedicate time to him each day. This was a great lesson that he never forgot, and that made him react positively.

This illustration reminds us of the parable that Jesus taught of the rich foolish man (Luke 12: 16-20), who only had time to work, work and work. Finally, he would die without enjoying everything he had accumulated. He did not have time for his wife, nor for his children, nor even for himself. And the saddest thing, he did not have time for God either.

The Spirit of Prophecy gives us the following contribution in this regard: "Give some of your leisure hours to your children; associate with them in their work and in their sports and win their confidence. Cultivate their friendship. Let parents devote the evenings to their families. Lay off

care and perplexity with the labors of the day.” The Adventist Home, page 192

Let’s remember the text at the beginning of the reading: ““Because to every purpose there is time..., therefore the misery of man is great upon him.” Ecclesiastes 8: 6

No matter how much work a man has, he should always set aside time for family priorities. Some marriage counselors call it "quality time." Quality time is the moment where we connect and coexist with the family, forgetting any commitments with others. It must be like a sacred time that he dedicates to his family.

Enrichment or Poverty

Remember that the title of this article spoke about an enrichment of our marriage. (a symbolic enrichment). But today, we see poverty in the family circle. What is this poverty? Well, the lack of communication is one of the greatest factors impoverishing many marriages, as well as the lack of pure love, affection, understanding, kindness, altruism, humility, peace, happiness, etc. Most importantly, the lack of Christ's presence in the home. “Unless the Lord builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain...” Psalm 127: 1

The absence of these ingredients in marriage will bring poverty in our sacred family circle. Egoism is a serious defect that will lead a marriage to the vilest poverty.

“If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; but if our thoughts dwell upon the wondrous love and pity of Christ for us, the same spirit will flow out to others. We should love and respect one another, notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot

help seeing. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous." Steps to Christ, page 121

"...Satan's aim has been to lead men to self first; and yielding themselves to his control, they have developed a selfishness that has filled the world with misery and strife, setting human beings at variance with one another. Selfishness is the essence of depravity, and because human beings have yielded to its power, the opposite of allegiance to God is seen in the world today. Nations, families, and individuals are filled with a desire to make self a center... Separating himself in his egotism from God and his fellow beings, he follows his unrestrained inclinations... Selfishness destroys Christlikeness, filling man with self-love." Counsels on Christian Stewardship page 24.

Selfishness comes to divide families and marriages. "And if a house is divided against itself, such a house cannot stand." Mark 3:25

Our Lord Jesus Christ attacked this existing and predominant great evil in the entire human race. He said: ... deny yourself ... (Matthew 16:24). How important it is to take this imperative order of our Savior very seriously. If we carry this out with his wonderful help, we will have healthy and very enriched marriages.

Necessary Requirements

It is very important that we consider the necessary requirements to be able to enrich our marriages. "In your life union your affections are to be tributary to each other's happiness. Each is to minister to the happiness of the other. This is the will of God concerning you... God has ordained that there should be perfect love and harmony between those who enter into the marriage relation. ...In the presence of the heavenly

universe, pledge themselves to love each other as God has ordained they should." *The Christian Home*, page 103

"The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other... You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Manifestations of self-will destroy the peace and happiness of the home. Let not your married life be one of contention. If you do, you will both be unhappy. Be kind in speech and gentle in action, giving up your own wishes. Watch well your words, for they have a powerful influence for good or for ill. Allow no sharpness to come into your voices. Bring into your united life the fragrance of Christlikeness. Express Love in words and deeds—There are many who regard the expression of love as a weakness, and they maintain a reserve that repels others...As the social and generous impulses are repressed, they wither, and the heart becomes desolate and cold. We should beware of this error. Love cannot long exist without expression. Let not the heart of one connected with you starve for the want of kindness and sympathy. Let each 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." *The Christian Home*, page 107

"Too many cares and burdens are brought into our families, and too little of natural simplicity and peace and happiness is cherished. There should be less care for what the outside world will say and more thoughtful attention to the members of the family circle. There should be less display and affectation of worldly politeness, and much more tenderness and love, cheerfulness and Christian courtesy, among the members of the household. Many need to learn how to make home attractive, a place of enjoyment. Thankful hearts and kind looks are

more valuable than wealth and luxury, and contentment with simple things will make home happy if love be there.” The Christian Home, page 108

The Little attentions that Enrich

“It is the little attentions, the numerous small incidents and simple courtesies of life, that make up the sum of life's happiness; and it is the neglect of kindly, encouraging, affectionate words, and the little courtesies of life, which helps compose the sum of life's wretchedness.... A house with love in it, where love is expressed in words and looks and deeds, is a place where angels love to manifest their presence and hallow the scene by rays of light from glory. There the humble household duties have a charm in them. None of life's duties will be unpleasant to your wife under such circumstances. She will perform them with cheerfulness of spirit and will be like a sunbeam to all around her...” The Christian Home, page 109

The time we dedicate to our family is of the utmost importance, this helps us to know our children, our wife and it also helps them know us. This makes family communication more united. Any time we spend together will result in a great blessing. At this precise moment, as I write this topic, my youngest son who is seven-year-old arrives and interrupts me, asking me to play with him. I was about to say: "I'm busy writing an important article that I have to finish, and I do not have time to play with you right now". But I reflect for a moment, and I decide to play with him for a few minutes. After sharing a few moments with him playing, my child was happy that I dedicated some time with him. Unfortunately, sometimes this is not always the case.

A household that spends time with the family, and that makes it a priority, will always be a family enriched by unity and happiness. It's sad to say, but that's the way it is, there is almost no time for the family to

strengthen its bonds of sociability and companionship. This is due to the tight schedules. This is one of the claims in current marriages. Let's ask ourselves, is this a correct or fair claim? How can I have better contact with such a busy husband? The lack of time shared as a family can become a serious problem. In these situations, they may end up feeling rejected, because as they perceive it, they must insist to be able to spend time together. But, after struggling for a time without success, they can resort to developing their own world, activities and circle of friends totally outside the family. Then the relationship begins to deteriorate more and more. Then they will not try anymore. There is simply no interest. When marriages cease to be a source of interest, they begin to lose mutual emotional needs, and reach a state of family apathy, which can eventually trigger, even divorce. This is Satan's plan. That is why today we have such a serious marital crisis. Welfare, peace and happiness in the home are extremely important elements for our existence. Consider the following recommendations that can contribute to peace, happiness and marriage enrichment:

1. Do not try to change your spouse, instead you should try to change yourself first.
2. Marriage is a good place to develop tact, understanding and tolerance. We all have a definite personality and we are so different in various aspects in relation to our character and temperament. We must apply the golden rule, which is "love and live in harmony", despite our differences.
3. Practice empathy. Empathy is the intention to understand the feelings and emotions of others. In other words, it is placing ourselves in the other's shoes.
4. Demonstrate that you appreciate the good qualities of your spouse and children. Encouragement, motivation and congratulations are key aspects for harmony and peace in the home.
5. Use frequent dialogue. Family communication is very essential.

6. Support and collaborate in household duties (husband and children).
7. Also remember the little details daily. In our homes we should not forget these simple, but important words: thank you and please.

Finally, I would like to close by saying that the great love of God must be the first and the greatest element in the home. "Beloved, let us love one another; because love is from God. Everyone who loves, is born of God, and knows God. He who does not love, has not known God, for God is love." (1 John 4: 7, 8) May the Lord help us to make good use of time, and thus enrich our marriage every day! Amen.

Saturday, May 11, 2019

TIME FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY

Adalício Fontes - Portugal

What is Communication?

Communication is a primary social process that includes the transmission of information, ideas, beliefs, feelings, suggestions or orders between two or more people, using a form of language as a tool for integration, instruction, exchange and development.

In the family context, communication problems are focused on the error of thinking that communication is just a dialog of emotions. But it is not! Communication is a dialog of words which express feelings and emotions. It must be said that communication is the art of meeting, and I agree with that thought.

The following episode is recorded in Genesis 3:8-12, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

One of the classic examples of communication is the one God established with man after the fall, when he became interested in his situation and started a dialog with him.

In the field of communication there are several levels, one of them is the SUPERFICIAL conversation – e.g. "How are you doing?", "How is

everything going?" This type of conversation gets to the edge of insignificance, although it may be better than embarrassing silence. By remaining in that condition, communication in marriage becomes superficial and mechanical, and it may be marked by resentment and frustration.

Another level of communication is the one of IDEAS AND OPINIONS. Here true intimacy begins because in this area there is a greater openness to express one's own thoughts, feelings and opinions. Here there is more freedom of expression to verbalize ideas, giving your spouse the opportunity to know him/her better in their intimacy.

On a third level of communication are FEELINGS AND DISCERNMENTS. Here feelings of frustration or happiness are expressed. It is here where experiences are honestly shared and interest is shown in their feelings and expressions. At this level the relationship will be enriched and expanded. You will feel valued, noticed, loved, appreciated, and secure in your spouse's affection. There will be precious moments of understanding and emotional satisfaction. Mutual participation of personal ideas and feelings is the ultimate expression in marital communication. At which level of communication is your marriage? Do you see the need for a more honest and profound communication in your marriage?

Naked One in Front of the Other

In Genesis 2:25 we read, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Children are not ashamed to be naked in front of anyone. Thus, it was in paradise, and this paradise needs to be back. We need to strip ourselves, undress emotionally, and tear the garments, in the environment of family, church and society. It is vital to go back to the point where we are not ashamed to talk about our traumas and fears, to take off the mask and speak frankly what we think. The factor that produces crisis is the fear of speaking, of expressing oneself, and the fear of what others will think about us. Fear of talking about our pride, traumas, jealousy, and a presumable ineptitude of the

spouse to hear. It is necessary to be prepared to speak out, as well as to hear.

When celebrating the golden anniversary, a couple was interviewed by a reporter who wanted to know the secret of such a long-lasting marriage. Then, feeling proud, the husband replied: "Do you know the bread stick? The part that I like the most is the tip of that bread, but since we got married, I cut it and I give it to my wife. That attitude symbolizes a principle of love I follow: She first." On her part, the wife replied: "I did not know it. I do not like that part of the bread, and for fifty years I have eaten for his sake." Now that we are getting to know about this, finally, we are going to eat the part we like the most. We have to be honest and sincere in our relationships.

Paul warns: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Galatians 5:15. In the light of the Bible, it can be said that it is possible to disagree without fighting, to discuss without hurting, and to say the truth without offending.

As leaders, we sometimes hear people get rid of all their problems and open up to us, and sometimes we think: it was not me who would have to hear all this, but an insensitive husband, an incompetent father, a disqualified wife, a brother, a mother-in-law. Those people do not remain naked there, because they need to express themselves and vent their problems. A research that has been done in the U.S.A. on fear shows that speaking in public is in first place, dying is in second place, and not having a comfortable old age is in third place.

We live a social chaos. Many people live in isolation, tied to their world, without courage to discover themselves

Authentic People

Although many couples were stripped in front of their spouses to express to them the true feeling of their hearts, they would not be understood. In such an attitude, imagine a mother-in-law unveiled in front of her daughter-in-law saying: "I love this son too much, and it's hard for me to see him leave the house, you take him, but I'm jealous of

him.” But, what mother-in-law would express her feelings that way? Nobody opens up that way! A husband or wife often experiences withdrawal from expressing delicate situations to their spouse, and they end up telling them to a pastor. Sometimes, undesirable information ends up being spread to other people, thus causing a crisis in the marital relationship.

There are women who buy things hiding from their husband because they cannot talk to them, men hiding things from the woman because they cannot strip in front of her. Home must be a safe harbor where masks should fall down, where sincerity should be used, and husband or wife should be the friendly shoulder to support the beloved person as “flesh of their flesh and bones of their bones.” How many might have difficulties to face the trial for not using sincerity! Someone can hide his actions from anyone, but everything is clear before God, and it will be revealed if there is no repentance and confession.

The Spirit of prophecy states: “The last great day is right upon us. Let all consider that Satan is now striving for the mastery over souls. He is playing the game of life for your souls. Will there be sins committed by you on the very borders of the heavenly Canaan? Oh, what revealing! The husband will know for the first time the deception and falsehood that have been practiced by the wife whom he thought innocent and pure. The wife for the first time will know the case of her husband, and the relatives and friends will see how error and falsehood and corruption have been clustering about them; for the secrets of all hearts will stand revealed. The hour of judgment is almost here—long delayed by the goodness and mercy of God. But the trump of God will sound, to the consternation of the unprepared who are living, and awaken the pale nations of the dead. The great white throne will appear, and all the righteous dead will come forth to immortality.” TSB 90.2

“Whatever have been the little sins indulged [they] will ruin the soul, unless they are overcome. The small sins will swell into the greater sins.

Impure thoughts, private, impure actions, unrefined, low, and sensual thoughts and actions in the marriage life, the giving of loose reins to the baser passions under the marriage vow, will lead to every other sin, the transgression of all the commandments of God." TSB 90.3

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." 1 Peter 2:1. Love, trust and truth promote intimacy. This is a principle: There is no intimacy in a marriage without truth. When one of the spouses begins to lie and deceive the other, sometimes, for fear of offending him/her, little by little he/she will get into increasingly difficult situations. That is why Ralph W. Emerson said: "He who utters a lie cannot judge what he has gotten himself into, as he will need to invent twenty more lies to cover up the first." Thus, conjugal life will become a trap of lies, which sooner or later will break in a painful way.

A Particular Marriage

The life of the couple Abraham and Sarai draws our attention by the way they talked with each other (Genesis 12: 10-20). Before entering Egypt, Abraham tells his wife Sara: "Say thou art my sister ..." and so the conversation continued. Imagine the father of faith saying that, without being afraid to tear his heart and express with sincerity what he was feeling for his wife. What did he want to say to his wife? That he preferred to be betrayed rather than be killed!

What does the lack of communication imply? One of the big problems between couples, and that is even being lost, is the lack of communication or trivial communication that in turn discloses a frivolous marriage.

We live in a society in which a large part of women are not like Sarai, the husband cannot open his heart to her. Men who are not like Abraham, who don't have the courage to say what they feel, and which are their dreams, fears, frustrations and longings. If I cannot talk to my wife or husband, to whom will I talk to?

“There is a sacred circle around every family which should be preserved. No other one has any right in that sacred circle. The husband and wife should be all to each other. The wife should have no secrets to keep from her husband, and let others know, and the husband should have no secrets to keep from his wife to relate to others. The heart of his wife should be the grave for the faults of the husband, and the heart of the husband the grave for his wife’s faults. Never should either party indulge in a joke at the expense of the other’s feelings. Never should either the husband or wife in sport or in any other manner complain of each other to others, for in frequently indulging in this foolish, and what may seem perfectly harmless, joking, it will end in trial with each other and perhaps estrangement. I have been shown that there should be a sacred shield around every family.” Manuscript 1, 1855

Consider very well what you say and to whom. Do not allow others to get close to your marriage, unless they are qualified and trustworthy. Do you know your wife's dream? Have you been interested in asking her if she thought about realizing her dreams any time?

Time to Speak and Time to Hear

Ecclesiastes 3:1,7 - "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." The wise man says here that there is time to keep silence. The problem is where do we have to be quiet. We talk, and in the time when we need to talk, we keep silence. When silence reigns in the relationship, death reigns and it begins to speak. You cannot build your success or your ministry on the debris of a marriage. Be frank with each other. It is better a truth told than a truth found out. It is better to confess a temptation than to confess a fall. What is true shouldn't be concealed.

Abraham dismissed Hagar at Sarai's request. (Now the opposite) The man who heard the woman's voice. Genesis 16: 2 "And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray

thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai." Was it easy for Sarah to do what she did? But she tore her heart, she emptied herself because her dream was to have a child. She talked about her dream. Then, she opened her heart to her husband again, and said, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son." Genesis 21:10. She expressed what was bothering her, she emptied her heart. Contemporarily, one of the reasons for broken-down marriages is to have to put up with what bothers or threatens existence.

One thing each day, and that reaches the proportion of a snowball with no solution. According to Ed Wheat, author of the book "Love That Does not Quench," the silence of the husband, the apparent indifference to the wife's feelings, and his refusal to discuss things with her, can destroy the marriage. He also states that, "infidelity kills thousands and silence kills ten Thousands."

The lack of dialogue in the marriage can cause the multiple failure of all which was built throughout the union. The woman is born to talk. That is an inherent need of her.

The woman spends a part of her life in the company of other women (mother, aunts, friends) and when she gets married she wants to talk with her husband as if he were another woman.

At some point in your conversation with your wife, did you notice why you did not look at her? You can answer and say: Darling, I hear with my ear. But she wants to talk while looking into your eyes. Sometimes the greatest desire of the woman is not that the husband gives a solution, but that he listens to her.

Before touching any other part of the woman, touch her ears. Many men, during the day, treat the woman like a plebeian, putting only trash in her ear, and at night, they want to treat them like queens with crowns and everything else.

Conclusion

The Bible says "speaking the truth in love." The deepest wounds come from those we love the most. Criticism kills, that's why stones of criticism and censorship should not be thrown.

You have to know how to speak, so that your spouse knows what you think about him or her, otherwise the marriage may end. The inspired word says, "Let no a clumsy word proceed out of your mouth". That means a word that hurts, that offends, a deceitful and unnecessary word. If what you are going to say does not edify the spouse, it is better not to say it. Just say a word when it's better than silence. Try to pronounce words of softness, wisdom and forgiveness. A Chinese proverb says, "If you are patient at a moment of anger, you are avoiding a hundred years of repentance."

Many of us as leaders are kind enough to talk to outsiders, but we have difficulty talking to those at home! The tolerance rate for others is ten, but for our own family, it is zero. You learn more when you hear than when you talk.

The servant of God says, "The true greatness of a man is measured by the force of feeling and emotions he can subdue". A good word nourishes, how? Proverbs 16:24 says, "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Try to plant a flower of softness in the heart of your spouse, and a garden of peace will flourish in your marriage. The couple that does not live complaining, nor hiding anything from each other, reaches an excellent level of confidence and satisfaction in their relationship because the freedom to speak the truth, with love, will provide a full and wholesome communication.

May God bless our families. Amen.

Sunday, May 12, 2019

TIME FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Pablo Hunger - USA

Several studies show that more than 90% of American households have at least one Bible at home, but there is a big difference between just having a Bible in your home and having a Bible that you read and study. Another statistic shows that more than 50% of the people surveyed, mentioned that they have a Bible at home but have not read it. There is also a difference in having a Bible at home, and being involved in a Bible study within the family.

I was impressed when I visited Liberia in West Africa after it had gone through years of civil war. I remember that they told me that in a certain city, they only had one Bible in the congregation and shared it in order to read the Word of God. These people had such a great interest in studying the Holy Scriptures! Time has passed, and almost each home now has a Bible. But how much do we read our Bibles and commune with the Word of God?

We desire to be friends with God but take very little time to hear the voice of God speaking to us through His word. It is because of this that Solomon's wise words are shared for us in Proverbs 1:22-33: "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your

destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

Don't we see a picture of our society portrayed here? Man desires success, but without making God His priority. That is why so many families suffer, and why there are so many divorces. Even in countries with a majority of Christians, communion with God has become a mere formality. Although finding a Bible may be easy, we find it difficult to devote time to its study. Plans are made in households to achieve goals, with the desire to achieve family prosperity, but little is talked about regarding setting aside time for communion with God.

In Christian households, it is not that parents do not want their children to understand God and know His truth, but it is usually a matter of finding the time and way to motivate children in the study of the Bible. God has entrusted the parents with the direction of the study of the Word of God in their homes, and it is also a wonderful opportunity that creates bonds of unity among the members of the family. God gave Moses a very important command that he was to pass on to God's people:

“And these words, **which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them** diligently unto thy children, **and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.**” – Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

In this guideline that God gave, we see several important points that we want to highlight:

First of all, God addresses the parents by specifying the important task of parents in fulfilling their duties as educators and guides for their children. And the Lord does make this simply a piece of advice, but asks that it be a priority in the parent's responsibility. The scriptures say, "I command you." The home is an institution created by God for the happiness of mankind, and God has appointed the study of the Word of God as the parent's responsibility.

The truth is that we are loaded with work every day, and lack time for so many things. We usually give priority to things that have expected short-term results and those that give us joy and satisfaction. At night, parents get so tired that they both seek a way to relax and rest. Remember that Satan is always trying to place out sight on passing things and tries to divert your mind from the priorities that provide a safe foundation for your home.

Secondly, the Lord speaks about His order saying, "they will be in your heart." In other words, God's desire is that parents love communing with him, and rejoice in the reading of His word. We cannot give our children something that we don't have inspiration for—something we ourselves don't enjoy and prioritize. We want our children to be successful, we want conjugal unity and happiness in the family, but are we paying attention to God's request? I recommend that you set aside some time, perhaps tonight, along with your spouse and children, to make plans to dedicate a specific time for communion with God and make this a priority in your home. As a parent, you must make the decision and make sure that the time devoted to God is faithfully fulfilled in your home.

Remember the rich blessings, privileges and benefits that result from reading the word of God. If you apply the advice of the Word of God, then you will receive peace, happiness, advice, encouragement,

inspiration, direction, harmony, positive changes of character, health improvement, emotional and spiritual balance, fulfilled social needs, an elevated moral and intellectual nature, and a firm foundation in your children, uniting the family. This will help avoid damages such as sadness, recklessness, cursing, and much more.

As the third inspired counsel, the scripture says, "you will repeat them to your children." There is a saying that repetition is the mother of retention. Another saying says, repetition is the mother of wisdom. Repeating an act creates a habit. If we want our children to have good habits, we must create the habits in them, and must make these habits part of our living example as parents. Let's remember that our children learn more about what we do than what we tell them.

Our children need us to constantly repeat God's principles so that they may always dwell in their minds. We will see that when the habit has been created, then they themselves will remind us as parents, that the time has come for Bible meditation and prayer. This means that a habit has formed, which will last for a lifetime only if we continue to cultivate it on a regular basis.

It was also said that "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is therefore not an act, but a habit." So, if you want to see excellence in your children, then create healthy habits. Especially create the habit that God asks us: repeating the word of God.

It is also important to remember the importance of memorizing verses from the Scriptures with our children. This is a very important task for the mother of the home, who spends a lot of time with her children and has a special touch and love for their tender hearts and minds. The mother can do a great work by helping her children memorize the scriptures. It has been such a blessing for me to have memorized Bible verses during my childhood and youth. Many of them have been of

support in my decisions and of great strength during moments of danger. Therefore, I want to advise you, dear mother and father, that you should devote time to teach your children to memorize verses and even chapters of the Sacred Scriptures. These will accompany your children through moments that you can't even imagine today.

As the fourth inspired advice we are told "you will talk to them when at home." We must be united with God throughout our daily activities. The Word of God must accompany us in everything we do and are. Our daily language must be patient, joyful, with motivating words, gratitude, and worship to God. But our patience is lost easily, and instead of keeping our motivation up, we fall into the error of criticizing the mistakes of our children and sometimes even our spouse. Perhaps there is an even greater root of the problem—our self. We might be fighting alone, without God. Dear parents, God desires that we be entrusted to His care every day, and that we should walk in in His hand during our daily activities.

“The father is the priest and the house-band of the home. The mother is the teacher of the little ones from their babyhood, and the queen of the household. Never is she to be slighted. Never are careless, indifferent words to be spoken to her before the children. She is their teacher. In thought and word and deed the father is to reveal the religion of Christ, that his children may see plainly that he has a knowledge of what it means to be a Christian.... {RC 178.5}

When we take decisions, we must present them to God in prayer and ask what His will is. But unfortunately, we often only turn to God when things are not working well and habits have formed that although they can be changed, the situation becomes very difficult. But be courageous, it is time to take decisions that will lead us to happiness with our partner and children.

We should also mention the importance of having moments of studying the Word of God as a family and moments of sharing a little about what we have individually studied from the word of God. In my home, one of our habits is that on Sunday mornings, when we are all at home, we spend some time sharing our personal experiences of the Bible readings we individually had throughout the week. Therefore, we begin the day with a meditation where each family member shares a little about what they've read during the week and then also shares what impressed them or what they found important. As parents, we need to motivate everyone to continue dedicating personal time to reading and prayer with God, so that when Sunday comes, we can all share our thoughts. Dear parents, establish a time in your home,] where your family can delve into some topic or share the reflections of the Word of God together.

I also want to mention the blessing that I have experienced during the occasions that I have spent time studying a Bible topic with my wife, and then discussing our conclusions together. This is also a wonderful habit to help unite couples in the fear of the Lord.

For the fifth point, it mentions "you will speak of them... Walking down the road. " We cannot say that we can take vacations from studying the Word of God. According to the ever-inspired counsel, we must be united with the sacred principles. When on vacation, we usually have more free time or we are more relaxed, and this is where we, with more reason, can devote time to the reflection of the word of God. On the other hand, being unoccupied often brings us closer to danger and temptation but being united with God will protect us against evil.

We must also cultivate the habit of entrusting ourselves into the hands of God when we leave our homes. Don't start a trip without asking God for His protection. It's so nice to hear the children remember and say "Dad, we haven't prayed yet", and to know that the fear of the Lord and

the desire to remain under the care of the Almighty dwells in their minds. We have been miraculously protected by the hand of God so many times, and yet have sometimes failed to recognize His saving power. I recommend that you follow God's advice if this habit has not yet been cultivated in your home. Don't leave your house without first praying and asking God for His protection. Don't take a vacation without God.

If we pay attention to the call of God given to Moses, two specific moments in everyday family life are mentioned as the last point, "when you lie down and when you get up." This is a clear reference to the importance of doing a morning devotion at the beginning of the day and an evening reflection at the end of the day. These important moments of devotion and reading the Word of God must exist in every family.

We must get up a few minutes before we are accustomed to, so that we can accomplish God's call of reading the word of God together as a family. This may seem like too great of an effort if we think about the different work and study schedules of the family, but time spent with God as a family is not lost time. If both parents can't be there for morning worship, then the mother will fulfill God's call. The morning is the right moment to thank God for His protection during the night, and the time to entrust our lives into the hands and care of God for the activities of the day. Similarly, when the sun sets, after having a busy day filled with challenges, it is time to thank the Lord for His care and entrust ourselves into His hands for the night's rest.

This morning and evening devotion must be like an altar where the family congregates to plead for the grace of God. Israel offered a sacrifice to God every day in the morning and evening. God does not ask you to bring a lamb or another animal for the sacrifice, but instead requests that you separate a time in your home, with your wife and children, to meditate upon His Holy word. By doing this, you will receive strength and blessings from on high.

Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent... Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry. {PP 144.1}

Consider some of these practical tips for family morning and evening worships:

1. Dedicate a specific time for the reflection of the Word of God. This will make it easier for the habit to form. Your children will await the moment and will naturally separate it from their other activities.
2. Let the time of reflection be short so that it doesn't become tiring—especially if the children are young, because the concentration span at a young age isn't very long.
3. Make worship a pleasant time. Try to share practical experiences or illustrations that will allow the truth to be understood and remembered more easily.
4. Try to make sure that each member of the family reads a part or participates in some way during the time of devotion.
5. Give each member of the family a specific day to lead the worship. This will motivate them to make extra efforts to prepare themselves.
6. Let each family member share their conclusion of what was read. Even the smallest members should give their ideas. You will be surprised at the thoughts your children will present.
7. Let each member of the family present his or her prayer requests so that the whole family can pray for the person's needs.
8. Adapt the Biblical reading to the age of the children. For younger children, it should be shorter and more illustrated than for youth.

9. There are different ways to read the Bible: chronologically, by books, by subject, etc. Keep it varied so that no monotony is formed.
10. Always apply what was read to a personal level of your everyday life, and don't forget to accompany the reading with a praise and sincere prayer.

The Lord extends you an invitation in Job 22:21-28: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defense, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways."

Dear parents, don't miss the opportunity of befriending God. He will make your life good and will give you peace. God desires to bless your family. Now is the time to establish plans with your family, and to be united more closely with God and His word. May God richly bless you.

Saturday, May 18, 2019

TIME FOR INTIMACY IN THE FAMILY

Júlio Sandoya - Brasil

The scriptures in Genesis 2:24 describe the divine purpose concerning marriage with the following words: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Marriage is a divine institution, and it has among its objectives the procreation and the increase of the human family. The third part of the angels had been cast out of heaven, and God created man to multiply saintly, and thus, replenish heaven with glorified human beings who had to take the place of those who lost their place.

Intimacy in the Couple

Man had to join his wife and "be one flesh." That suggests an emotional, social, spiritual union, and an exclusive and unique way of intimacy that goes beyond the sexual sphere itself. Therefore, the intimacy in marriage should not be restricted to the physical area, since its scope is more extensive, and it includes all the levels of the conjugal relationship.

It is evident that the conjugal act is the apex of intimacy, and it polarizes all kinds of personal intimacy of that "single flesh." That means that intimacy in marriage brings together all the relationships, affections, emotions, ideals, and projects of life of a couple in mutual association.

The current concept of intimacy has been perverted, and many people believe that just the sexual act between two people implies intimacy. Sex was created by God, and one of its objectives is to renew intimacy

and strengthen the conjugal union, but when sexual intercourse is carried out in a selfish, imposing or only as a means of satisfying the fleshly passion, it gives rise to a feeling of use or object of pleasure that obliterates intimacy. In this way, there can be sexual relationship without intimacy and intimacy without having sex, or at least without this being the main objective, because it is not defined only by pleasure, but also by love, courtesy, kindness, affection, the promotion of the spouse's happiness.

Intimacy comes from the Latin "INTIMUS", which means "inside, or that is inside." That way, when "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel... Therefore she took a vail, and covered herself... And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Genesis 24. 63-64,67. Thus Isaac and his wife's intimacy began. She entered her husband's tent, and it became the center of their conjugal intimacy, the sacred circle where it could and should grow and strengthen.

Threats against Intimacy

The divine marriage relationship must be preserved, and its intimacy kept as a holy vessel and privilege. This communion is a holy and exclusive circle in which no one has the right to infiltrate. When the defenses of the intimacy of marriage are invaded, their strength is violated, and home is exposed to the enemy's attacks.

The intimacy of the family must be respected. But it often happens that strange and malicious people try to enter the holy circle of the family intimacy, discovering secrets, searching information, and modifying scenes to feed their sick curiosity, and then speculate with them, and raise chaos in the family atmosphere. The Spirit of Prophecy

warns: "Oh, how many lives are made bitter by the breaking down of the walls which inclose the privacies of every family, and which are calculated to preserve its purity and sanctity! A third person is taken into the confidence of the wife, and her private family matters are laid open before the special friend. This is the device of Satan to estrange the hearts of the husband and wife." *The Adventist Home*, p. 337

"When a woman relates her family troubles or complains of her husband to another man, she violates her marriage vows; she dishonors her husband and breaks down the wall erected to preserve the sanctity of the marriage relation; she throws wide open the door and invites Satan to enter with his insidious temptations. This is just as Satan would have it." *Ibid*, p. 338.

The scriptures say that "through wisdom is an house builded", and that "every wise woman buildeth her house." Proverbs 24:3; 14:1. "The wife is to grace the family circle as a wife and companion to a wise husband..." *Daughters of God*, p. 181. Part of that "charm" is the intimacy that she must preserve, like a government state secrets. It was with reason that Solomon in his love poem says to the wife: "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Song of Solomon 4:12

Dialog and Intimacy

An antagonist of family intimacy is the lack of dialog. It is common that over the years, relationship crises, the emigration of children, traumatic experiences in family life, and even emotional states result in the loss of the couple's intimacy. Therefore, there is an imperious need to restore intimate dialog and for restoration of trust, the mutual expressions of love and the exchange of courtesies.

"Husbands and wives should feel it their privilege and their duty to reserve for the privacy of each other's society the interchange of love tokens between themselves." *In Heavenly Places*, p. 207. Husbands and

wives must be able to develop such sensitivity that they can recognize the inner echo of their "second self", even in the midst of social turbulence, and the circumstances around them. Many times, husbands and wives who cultivated their intimacy through long years of coexistence, converge in thoughts, ideas, appreciations, concepts and judgments, in such a way that when being expressed by one of them, the other responds with satisfaction: "I was thinking the same thing."

No husband or wife should allow their intimacy to rust. She must have an imperative existence and a positive impact in all the mutual coexistence. The couple must constantly feed their intimacy so that it is renewed and it overcomes the wear and tear to which it is frequently subjected, it must maintain firm control so that it is not invaded by any foreign element, and it must be revitalized by caring looks, kind words, gentle attitudes, and motivating actions.

In some aspects, modernism and technology have become antagonists of the marriage's intimacy. For example, some decades ago the couple could enjoy soft music or an interesting dialog before sleeping, but today, each one is in their own world, attached to their Smartphone, without dialog, thus breaking the intimacy, or better, transferring it from their spouse to social networks. Some psychologists call this phenomenon "syndrome of the coming break", which is verified when people are together, but there is no dialog.

Intimacy in the Family

There is intimacy in the family; an abstract area that it keeps for itself, which we might well call an area of secret. It contains episodes, feelings, failures, memories, and a whole bundle of experiences and family history.

The family must be intimate of itself and preserve its privacy. Each family keeps secrets which are not interests of third parties, which

should not be published, because "A talebearer revealeth secrets." Proverbs 11:13. Dignity of people can only be secured when they keep their heart or hearts, which only the individual or the family are interested in.

Many families break up because they lose their privacy, either because of immaturity or the intrusion of third parties, which violate individual freedom and respect. I must also emphasize that intimacy requires the free consent of the person to take part in it without it being destroyed. Therefore, knowing or spreading the intimacy of a person against their will implies his or her destruction.

There must be a strong intimacy between parents and children based on love and trust. It often happens that when that trust is lacking, children transfer their intimacy to other people, thus creating a dangerous gap in the family relationship. Parents should dialog with their children, pray with them applying the lessons of the word of God in each situation, and above all, seeking divine guidance.

Family intimacy must be strengthened every day. Parents and children must cultivate it so that this bond becomes a protective wall against the constant siege of external forces that seek to break up the family. The unity of the family is connected with intimacy. We can then establish the following equation: Greater intimacy, more unity; greater unity, more intimacy. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. Certainly, intimacy requires unity, because it must be entrusted to someone who can preserve it so that it becomes profitable.

Children must be used to trust in their parents, who must keep them from companies which are a threat to their privacy and intimacy. The inspired counsel warns: "In forming friendship, great caution should be exercised lest an intimacy be contracted with one whose example it would not be safe to imitate; for the effect of such an intimacy is to lead away from God, from devotion, and the love of the truth. It is positively

dangerous for you to be intimate with friends who have not a religious experience." Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 42.

Intimacy with God

The sense of intimacy has to do with deeper bonds in any kind of relationship. When we refer to intimacy with God, we are talking about a close relationship of love, friendship, trust, hope, and faith with the Lord, based on respect and obedience to His precepts, because "his secret is with the righteous." Proverbs 3:32, and "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Psalm 25:14

Intimacy with God means to hunger and thirst for Him, to know Him more, to love Him, to be in His presence. Our last thoughts when resting at night must be connected with Him, and even during it, when we wake up, that intimacy must elevate us towards Him, and when we wake up in the morning, we renew it again. That was the behavior of the messianic prophet: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." Isaiah 26:9. That intimacy is maintained and strengthened through prayer and communion with God. Jesus must be our close friend, our confidant and our companion in the journey of this life.

The Lord bless all the families so that through His blessed grace each one of them may become a piece of heaven, a fortress where love and trust reigns, and the intimacy with the Lord can increase the intimacy of the spouses, children, brethren, and friends in its effective and excellent measure. Amen.

Saturday, May 25, 2019

TIME FOR HEALTH IN THE FAMILY

Roland de la Paz - Filipines

“The life is more than meat, and the body [is more] than raiment.”

Luke 12:23

In the beginning God created a perfect world, free from any form of maladies, sorrow, sin and pain. The Bible states that “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, [it was] very good.”(Genesis 1:31). They have access to the Tree of Life in condition of obedience. But because our first parents sinned against the Creator, the earth was cursed and the beauty that God created was interspersed with sickness, and hideousness. It was the plan of the archenemy to destroy the happiness God bestowed upon man through his subtlety and the first couple was his first victim. Succeeding generations revealed the effects of sin in this world. Cursed was the ground, and man shall live in sorrow as a consequence of his disobedience, and diseases are more evident even until the time Jesus Christ lived on earth. He cured several diseases and as was mentioned in the Bible “and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.” (Matthew 4:24)

Present Time

In our time, the present generation experience fatal diseases and if traced we'll find that transgression of the laws of health and intemperance are the main causes. Every family encounters diseases which if left uncorrected, will make man's life shorter and more

miserable. Statistics reveal that diseases of the heart, respiratory diseases, diabetes, cancers of all type, diarrhea, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, kidney diseases, Alzheimer's disease and dementia are the leading cause of mortality⁽¹⁾ in this planet. All walks of life affected, even the Christian family as well is not exempted. With this article, we pray that God will help us find a solution, which He revealed in the Bible and testimonies, so that every obedient family will benefit from His counsel and make life blissful despite the constant attempt of the archenemy to destroy the creation with its happiness. "We should educate ourselves, not only to live in harmony with the laws of health, but to teach others the better way. Many, even of those who profess to believe the special truths for this time, are lamentably ignorant with regard to health and temperance. They need to be educated, line upon line, precept upon precept. The subject must be kept fresh before them. This matter must not be passed over as nonessential, for nearly every family needs to be stirred up on the question. The conscience must be aroused to the duty of practicing the principles of true reform." {CG 361.2}

Roles of Family Members

Every member of the family plays an important part in the wellbeing of the whole family. But the role of the mother is the most significant of all. Most of the times, it is the mother who prepares the food for her family. The skill in cookery is essential to bring her family in good health. "To the health and happiness of the whole family nothing is more vital than skill and intelligence on the part of the cook. By ill-prepared, unwholesome food she may hinder and even ruin both the adult's usefulness and the child's development. Or by providing food adapted to the needs of the body, and at the same time inviting and palatable, she can accomplish as much in the right as otherwise she accomplishes in the wrong direction. So, in many ways, life's happiness is bound up with faithfulness in common duties." AA 89. She should be an advocate of health reform as the testimonies mentioned. "The will of God has

been plainly expressed to all mothers; He would have them, by precept and example, advocates of health reform. They should plant their feet firmly upon principle, in no case to violate the physical laws which God has implanted in their beings." AH 252. The desire to prepare the right kind of nourishment was neglected and there is a general cry all over our land, "Where shall I find a good housekeeper, one who knows how to cook?" Indeed, the dearth of good cooks and housekeepers is becoming alarming. If this state of things continues, we shall be left entirely destitute of good domestic help. The cook fills an important place in the household. She is preparing food to be taken into the stomach, to form brain, bone, and muscle. The health of all the members of the family depends largely upon her skill and intelligence. Household duties will never receive the attention they demand until those who faithfully perform them are held in proper respect. {CTBH 73,74.}

With the youth and students, and every children in the family, you can consider the counsel from the inspired pen to be a better instrument for God in the family with regards to obtaining good health. "Many of the branches of study that consume the student's time are not essential to usefulness or happiness, but it is essential for every youth to have a thorough acquaintance with everyday duties. If need be, a young woman can dispense with a knowledge of French and algebra, or even of the piano; but it is indispensable that she learn to make good bread, to fashion neatly fitting garments, and to perform efficiently the many duties that pertain to homemaking." {AH 89.2}

The role of a daughter in the family needs to be developed as early as possible. During their childhood, the parents, especially the mother, should motivate and educate her children in household chores especially in food preparation and cooking. "There are very many girls who have married and have families, who have but little practical knowledge of the duties devolving upon a wife and mother. They can

read, and play upon an instrument of music; but they cannot cook. They cannot make good bread, which is very essential to the health of the family. . . . To cook well, to present healthful food upon the table in an inviting manner, requires intelligence and experience. The one who prepares the food that is to be placed in our stomachs, to be converted into blood to nourish the system, occupies a most important and elevated position. The position of copyist, dressmaker, or music teacher cannot equal in importance that of the cook." (1873) 3T 156-158.

Every Woman's Duty to Become a Skillful Cook

It is your duty to know how to cook, and it is your duty to teach your daughters to cook. When you are teaching them the art of cookery, you are building around them a barrier that will preserve them from the folly and vice which they may otherwise be tempted to engage in. {CD 252.5}

Let Men and Women Learn to Cook

It is good both for men and women to learn the art of cooking and food preparation to maintain the good health of every family. Men sometimes think that cooking is a work for women. Maybe in the early times when women usually cook for their family. But now, around the world, hotels and restaurants usually have male chef and cooking is no longer solely the work of women. Motivating and educating boys in the art of cooking is needed now than in previous times. The inspired pen stated that "I appeal to men and women to whom God has given intelligence: Learn how to cook. I make no mistake when I say "men," for they, as well as women, need to understand the simple, healthful preparation of food. Their business often takes them where they cannot obtain wholesome food. They may be called to remain days and even weeks in families that are entirely ignorant in this respect. Then, if they have the knowledge, they can use it to good purpose. {CD 253.2}

An Impoverished Diet Discredits Health Reform

Currently, in every cities and towns, you will find several fast food chains and convenient stores that sell food for busy people. People don't seem to have time to prepare or they simply choose food that will satisfy their hunger regardless if it is nutritious or not. Fatty, salty, and rich food are the most common products that are sold. Food Advertisements are so tempting that families usually visit these places for their family bonding. With this in view, we need to educate ourselves to be more watchful and careful in choosing these kind of foods which are usually tainted with carcinogens. "Some of our people conscientiously abstain from eating improper food, and at the same time neglect to eat the food that would supply the elements necessary for the proper sustenance of the body. Let us never bear testimony against health reform by failing to use wholesome, palatable food in place of the harmful articles of diet that we have discarded. Much tact and discretion should be employed in preparing nourishing food to take the place of that which has constituted the diet of many families. This effort requires faith in God, earnestness of purpose, and a willingness to help one another. A diet lacking in the proper elements of nutrition brings reproach upon the cause of health reform. We are mortal, and must supply ourselves with food that will give proper sustenance to the body." Letter 135, 1902

Worth Ten Talents

Let not the work of cooking be looked upon as a sort of slavery. What would become of those in our world if all who are engaged in cooking should give up their work with the flimsy excuse that it is not sufficiently dignified? Cooking may be regarded as less desirable than some other lines of work, but in reality it is a science in value above all other sciences. Thus God regards the preparation of healthful food. He places a high estimate on those who do faithful service in preparing

wholesome, palatable food. The one who understands the art of properly preparing food, and who uses this knowledge, is worthy of higher commendation than those engaged in any other line of work. This talent should be regarded as equal in value to ten talents; for its right use has much to do with keeping the human organism in health. Because so inseparably connected with life and health, it is the most valuable of all gifts. {CD 251.2}

Three Essentials for Family Happiness

In the study of hygiene the earnest teacher will improve every opportunity to show the necessity of perfect cleanliness both in personal habits and in all one's surroundings. The value of the daily bath in promoting health and in stimulating mental action should be emphasized. Attention should be given also to sunlight and ventilation, the hygiene of the sleeping room and the kitchen. Teach the pupils that a healthful sleeping room, a thoroughly clean kitchen, and a tastefully arranged, wholesomely supplied table will go farther toward securing the happiness of the family and the regard of every sensible visitor than any amount of expensive furnishing in the drawing room. That "the life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment" (Luke 12:23) is a lesson no less needed now than when given by the divine Teacher eighteen hundred years ago. CG 365,366.

Guard the Avenues of the Soul

The mind must be kept guarded every time of the day as the enemy is tempting people, even the family of the believers, with reading, hearing and seeing that which will endanger the mind of absorbing carnal things. The most common victim are the young family members, although parents are not exempted, because almost all the people of today's generation are well exposed to social media and sharing of information, ideas, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and

networks. "Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest." {2MCP 732.4}.

Disease

Many people of today are so sickly and the cause of the disease they acquire is usually neglected and taking of poisonous drugs is very rampant. Death caused by prescription drugs, and over the counter drugs is increasing every year. Self-medication is also common, especially in under developed and developing countries. Self-medication is a human behavior in which an individual uses a substance or any exogenous influence to self-administer treatment for physical or psychological ailments.⁽²⁾It is the selection and use of medicines by individuals to treat self-recognized illnesses or symptoms.The most widely self-medicated substances are over-the-counter drugs used to treat common health issues.

"Disease is an effort of nature to free the system from conditions that result from a violation of the laws of health. In case of sickness, the cause should be ascertained. Unhealthful conditions should be changed, wrong habits corrected. Then nature is to be assisted in her effort to expel impurities and to re-establish right conditions in the system." MH 127. Families need to learn the systems of the body and its functions. "Parents should seek to interest their children in the study of physiology. There are but few among the youth who have any definite knowledge of the mysteries of life. The study of the wonderful human organism, the relation and dependence of its complicated parts, is one in which many parents take little interest. Although God says to them, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John1: 2), yet they do not

understand the influence of the body upon the mind or of the mind upon the body." CH 428

Seek to Understand Nature's Remedies

Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power--these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature's remedial agencies and how to apply them. It is essential both to understand the principles involved in the treatment of the sick and to have a practical training that will enable one rightly to use this knowledge. {CG 366.1}

Dear brothers and sisters around the world, as we near the end of this earth's history and heading towards the greatest conflict between good and evil, we need to consecrate our lives today wholly to God. Every family together with its members, should be watchful especially now that the enemy is working double time, because he knows that his time is near. Let us take care of our body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We were bought at a price, by the precious blood of the Lamb and we ought to give thanks and glory to our Creator and Redeemer. By taking care of our body, we will have a clearer mind of the things that are spiritual and heavenly. May God bless every family, is my wish and prayer in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

- 1) Global Health Estimates 2016; Death by Cause, Age, Sex, Country and by Region, 2000-2016, Geneva; World Health Organization 2018
- 2) "What is self-Medication". WORLD SELF-MEDICATION INDUSTRY. Retrieved 25 May 2016.