

Readings for the Family Month  
May 1 2023

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE  
WE WILL SERVE THE



LORD



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Also, my thanks to the team of sisters who has been with me during this period, thanks for your support, your work and your dedication. Philippians 4:19

Director of the General Conference Family Department.



Pr. Adalicio Fontes de Souza



*As For Me and My House, We Will Serve The Lord*

# INTRODUCTION

The present and future of our families depend largely on the decisions we make. All of us long for a successful family. Let us consider the wisdom God gave Joshua, Abigail, and Rahab, to make the best choice that was of great blessing in their home. Let us follow the example of Abigail who knew how to act wisely and in a Christian way, thus avoiding the death of her husband and her family; and let us imitate Rahab who despite being a pagan woman, decided to be on God's side.

One of the most important decisions you make in life is choosing a partner; if you take your time when buying something material, it will be even more necessary to spend time in prayer, reflection, and meditation on this matter, so that God's will is fulfilled in your life.

When Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," he had a clear purpose for his family, even though he knew the problems he would face because of this decision. All determination includes risks, but these risks should not prevent us from, nor instill fear of reaching our objectives that we have already placed in God's hands.

Young Christians looking for a partner, who want to enter into marriage and thus form a family, run the risk of failure if they do not have a clear focus or if they are unaware of the responsibility and commitment they will assume. Many young people are led by emotions and feelings; and as they are led without reason, they fall into a terrible abyss, losing

*As For Me and My House, We Will Serve The Lord* 

their life project, and even abandoning their faith. There is a need of young people who make decisions with wisdom and understanding, because marriage is a commitment until death; it is not a game or experiment, or a random thing. It is important that the young person knows in whom he/she has believed in order to form a strong and successful family.

Our invite is for young people and adults to delve into the depths of their consciences and ask themselves questions that will facilitate the establishment of a heaven-approved marriage and lead them to make a commitment to God and the church.

The Family Department of the General Conference has prepared a series of readings for this month of May 2023, to be read in all churches and groups worldwide. The purpose of these readings is that they serve as a tool for each reader so that they can build families that testify and glorify God.

Family Department



*As For Me and My House, We Will Serve The Lord*



1

May 6th  
SABBATH



## *Is Marriage a Contract For Life?*

**Pr. Bright Dickson Fue**  
Tanzania

Like all other gifts of God entrusted to man for the benefit of the human race, the marriage institution was perverted by sin. Divorce and remarriage, as well as other anomalies, were widely established and commonly accepted practices among the nations before the day of Moses. The patriarchs, being men of God, were nevertheless subject to the influence of their environment. Their familiarity with popular customs blinded their eyes, and they were not always able to see sin in the light that God sees it. Abraham and Jacob were polygamists, not because they wanted to defy God and rebel against His law, but because their minds had

been affected by the moral conditions that surrounded them, and they could see nothing wrong in certain social customs, like polygamy. When the children of Israel left Egypt, they brought an Egyptian mentality with them. Divorce and polygamy were permitted among them, although these practices were completely alien to God's original arrangement. Moses sanctioned them in his civil code, which at least in this respect, was influenced by popular custom. God did not stop Moses from granting such a law, because the Jewish people still under the influence of regional custom, were not prepared to make great strides

toward the perfect will of Him who rules the universe.

But as the purpose of the gospel is

*The original idea of the marriage*  
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the gospel**

“every divine institution is to be restored” (*Prophets and Kings*, page 678.2), Christ could not be expected to approve those imperfections in the legislation of Moses. The original idea of the marriage institution must be reinstated—its original purity and beauty must be retrieved—through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the days of Christ, there were among the Jews two schools of thought and practice. One was led by Shammai, who granted a divorce on the ground of adultery alone, while the other was under the direction of Hillel, who condemned divorce on any pretext that the husband might have. The Pharisees were often involved in the controversy between these two schools, and now they decided to tempt Jesus by drawing Him into the conflict.

“Is it lawful for a man to put his wife for every cause?” they asked.

The Lord answered:

“Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female... For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh, ... What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The Pharisees objected:

“Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”

“Moses because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives,” Jesus explained, “but from the beginning, it was not so.” (Read Mathew 19:3-8).

Jesus made it clear that the bill of divorcement mentioned in the legislation of Moses (Deuteronomy 24:1-5) was not a command, as on the perfect will of God, but only a consent-based; not on the perfect will of God, but on the hardness of their hearts, which were influenced by social customs. Jesus appealed to Genesis 2:24 against Deuteronomy 24:1-5, showing that, in the plan of salvation, the perfect will of God must triumph over the hardness of man's heart and any and every consent thereby obtained. The Christian religion, by putting the marriage institution into operation according to the original plan of God, has done more toward decency,



justice, peace, happiness, and civilization, than any other power in the world.

“The institution of marriage keeps the moral world in being and secures it from an untimely dissolution. Without it, natural affection and amiableness would not exist, domestic education would become extinct, industry and economy be unknown, and man would be left to the precarious existence of the savage. But for this institution, learning and refinement would expire, government sink into the gulf of anarchy, and religion, hunted from the earth, would hasten back to her native heavens.” (*Simmons, C.*, 2020, page 326).

### “How Readest Thou?”

If we want to have a clear picture before our eyes regarding divorce and remarriage, we must put together everything that has been written on the subject and consider time, place, and special circumstances. When Jesus confronted the lawyer's question, He did not only say, “What is written?” but also, “How readest thou?” (Luke 10:26). It is dangerous to read the Bible with preconceived ideas because we may, consequently, read our erroneous conclusion into a “Thus saith the

Lord,” making the Holy Scriptures say what they do not say. Consider this example: It is written that Abraham, who was a polygamist (Genesis 25:6), is *our father in the faith* (Romans 4:12; Galatians 3:7). And some read these verses with carnal eyes, proclaiming that polygamy is all right. We may also be tempted to read some Bible verses (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) and some of E.G. White's letters in a similar way. Strange enough, some people seem to be under the impression that sister White's personal opinion should be adopted as a doctrinal rule for the church as far as divorce and remarriage are concerned.

To stay on the safe side in this matter, let us take a single-hearted look into a few scriptures in an endeavor to obtain answers to some basic questions.

### Back to Genesis

If a man divorces his wife for no good reason and marries another woman, it is evident that he, thereby, commits adultery. What is not clear to some people is whether his ex-wife, the innocent party, is now free to remarry. Should the exception clause found in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, together with sister White's advice concerning a second marriage, be taken as final evidence

for a doctrine and a rule on behalf of divorce and remarriage? Some are ready to say, *Yes*. We, however, differ and, here, we set forth the reasons why we think otherwise.

When Jesus was confronted with the question of divorce and remarriage, He did not introduce an innovation. He simply drew the attention of his hearers to the days of old, to the marriage institution as it was originally given by God and as it was protected by God's law and made it clear to them that the concession of Moses was not in harmony with the idea of God. Considered in its pristine sense, when everything that God had made was very good (Genesis 1:31), the marriage institution was to be considered indissoluble. (Read Matthew 19:3-12).

Jesus said: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one little of the law to fail. [Therefore:] Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke 16:17,18).

Here we have the case of an innocent woman that is divorced from a man who put her away, not intending to remain unmarried and chaste but to become legally

attached to another woman. And according to the verse, he has already taken this step. Back to our first question: His ex-wife, the innocent party, who has received a bill of divorce from her adulterous husband, is she free now to remarry? No! Jesus said in Luke 16:18, that if she follows the example of her ex-husband, she becomes guilty of the same sin in which he has become involved. Result: two cases of adultery involving four people. On this basic question, there is perfect harmony between the gospels (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:12; Luke 16:18) and the writings of Paul (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10,11,39): a divorced lady has no right to remarry so long as her husband lives. And we think that the same rule must hold good for a divorced man also.

### **Harmony between Christ and Paul**

Paul was well acquainted with the truth as taught by Christ (1 Corinthians 11:23, first part), there is perfect harmony between them in the way they handled the marriage institution.

1) Jesus taught that a wife should not leave her husband and a husband should not leave his wife (Mark 10:2-12). Paul taught: "Let not the wife depart from her husband... and let

not the husband put away his wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:10,11).

2) If the exception clause belongs to the original, Jesus referred to the problem of fornication as it would often appear in the Jewish society (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Their suspicion of Joseph concerning his betrothed wife is a good example of this effect (Matthew 1:18-20). Paul dealt with society. He taught that connubial unions based on fornication must be dissolved (1 Corinthians 6:15-18; 7:2).

3) Jesus taught that a wife put away by her adulterous husband not is permitted to become the wife of another man (Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18). Paul taught that a wife, though put away by her husband, is still “bound by the law as long as her husband liveth” (1 Corinthians 7:10-15,39; Romans 7:1-3).

### **A Happy or Unhappy Marriage?**

“If those who are contemplating marriage would not have miserable, unhappy reflections after marriage, they must make it a subject of serious, earnest reflection now. This step taken unwisely is one of the most effective means of ruining the usefulness of young men and women. Life becomes a burden, a curse. No one can so effectually ruin a woman's happiness and

usefulness, and make life a heart-sickening burden, as her husband; and no one can do one-hundredth part as much to chill the hopes and aspirations of a man, to paralyze his energies and ruin his influence and prospects, as his wife. It is from the marriage hour that many men and women date their success or failure in this life and their hopes for the future life.” (*Adventist Home*, page 43.1).

“I wish I could make the youth see and feel their danger, especially the danger of making unhappy marriages.” (*Adventist Home*, page 43.2).

Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves of his course. He will not want to choose for himself but will feel that God must choose for him. We are not to please ourselves, for Christ pleased not Himself. It would not be understood to mean that anyone is to marry one whom he does not love. This would be a sin.

### **Make Haste Slowly**

“Few have correct views of the marriage relation. Many seem to think that it is the attainment of

perfect bliss; but if they could know one-quarter of the heartaches of men and women that are bound by the marriage vow in chains that they cannot and dare not break, they would not be surprised that I trace these lines. Marriage, in a majority of cases, is a most galling yoke. Thousands are mated but not matched. The books of heaven are burdened with the woes, the wickedness, and the abuse that lie hidden under the marriage mantle. This is why I would warn the young who are of marriageable age to make haste slowly in the choice of a companion. The path of married life may appear beautiful and full of happiness; but why may not you be disappointed as thousands of others have been?" (*Adventist Home*, page 44.1).

Those who are contemplating marriage should consider what will be the character and influence of the home they are founding. As they become parents, a sacred trust is committed to them. Upon them depends in a great measure the well-being of their children in this world, and their happiness in the world to come. To a great extent, they determine both the physical and the moral stamp that the little ones receive.

### **Vital Factors in the Choice**

"Great care should be taken by Christian youth in the formation of friendships and in the choice of companions. Take heed, lest what you now think to be pure gold turns out to be base metal. Worldly associations tend to place obstructions in the way of your service to God, and many souls are ruined by unhappy unions, either business or matrimonial, with those who can never elevate or ennoble." (*Adventist Home*, page 44.3).

"Weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny. The step you are about to take is one of the most important in your life, and should not be taken hastily. While you may love, do not love blindly." (*Adventist Home*, page 45.1).

*Instituted by God, marriage is a*  
**sacred ordinance and  
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of selfishness.**

"Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy or inharmonious and wretched. Let the questions be raised, will this union

help me heavenward? Will it increase my love for God? And will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in this life? If these reflections present no drawback, then in the fear of God move forward.” (*Adventist Home*, page 45.2).

Most men and women have acted in entering the marriage relationship as though the only question for them to settle was whether they loved each other. But they should realize that a responsibility rests upon them in the marriage relation further than this. They should consider whether their offspring will possess physical health and mental and moral strength.

**Prayer and Bible Study Are Necessary to Make the Right Decision:**

“Instituted by God, marriage is a sacred ordinance and should never in 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. The instruction given in God’s word on this point should be carefully considered. Heaven looks with pleasure upon a marriage formed with an earnest desire to

conform to the directions given in the Scripture. If there is any subject that should be considered with calm reason and unimpassioned judgment, it is the subject of marriage. If ever the Bible is needed as a counselor, it is before taking a step that binds persons together for life. But the prevailing sentiment is that in this matter the feelings are to be the guide, and in too many cases lovesick sentimentalism takes the helm and guides to certain ruin. It is here that the youth show less intelligence than on any other subject; it is here that they refuse to be reasoned with. The question of marriage seems to have a bewitching power over them. They do not submit themselves to God. Their senses are enchained, and they move forward in secretiveness, as if fearful that their plans would be interfered with by someone.” (*Counsels for the Church*, page 115.3).

“How much greater caution should be exercised in entering the marriage relation—a relation which affects future generations and the future life? Instead of this, it is often entered upon with jest and levity, impulse and passion, blindness and lack of calm consideration. The only explanation of this is that Satan loves to see misery and ruin in the world,

and he weaves this net to entangle souls. He rejoices to have these inconsiderate persons lose their enjoyment of this world and their home in the world to come.” (*Counsels for the Church*, page 116.2).

“Christ came not to destroy this institution, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation. He came to restore the moral image of God in man, and He began His work by sanctioning the marriage relation.” (*Counsels for the Church*, page 125.2).

“The marriage relation is holy, but in this degenerate age it covers vileness of every description. It is

abused and has become a crime which now constitutes one of the signs of the last days, even as marriages, managed as they were previous to the Flood, were then a crime. When the sacred nature and the claims of marriage are understood, it will even now be approved of Heaven; and the result will be happiness to both parties, and God will be glorified.” (*Counsels for the Church*, page 133.5).

Let us seek and adhere to the counsels of the Lord for there is no other refuge than Him. His words remain as steadfast as always. May God bless you. Amen.



## *Family Abandonment*

**Pr. Oscar Archila**  
El Salvador

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:18, 21-24, KJV) The Lord God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I

will make him a help meet for him.” When God created man, He made him a gregarious being by nature. God did not create man to live isolated or alone. Therefore, it is a necessity to live in community and to group together for one's own benefit. Being in partnership, man can survive protected from dangers and adversities caused by others. The family that seeks its God and lives close and in harmony with Him, is a happy and consistent family.

But why is this divine relationship of family coexistence broken? Nowadays, there are many families that have been split by the abandonment of one of the spouses or by children who



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May 11th  
THURSDAY



abandon their parents. Why? That is the result of sin that has hardened the heart and feelings of men and women.

### **A Crime Before God and the World**

The legal dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy defines as “a crime the abandonment committed by anyone who fails to fulfill the legal duties of assistance inherent to parental authority, guardianship, or foster care, or to provide the necessary assistance legally established for the support of their descendants or ascendants or spouse who are in need”.

The archenemy of families is Satan and we must be on our guard against his sure-fire attacks. Sadly, he is attacking families in general, for he knows that if he breaks up this union, he will have won the victory.

### **Satan's Attack in the Home**

“Our efforts to resist the attacks of Satan must be earnest and persevering. He employs his strength and skill in trying to turn us out of the right way. He watches our going out and our coming in, that he may find opportunity to hurt or destroy us. He works most successfully in darkness, injuring those who are ignorant of his devices. He could not gain advantage if his method of attack

were understood. The instruments he employs to effect his purposes, and transmit his fiery darts, are often the members of our own families.” (1TT, 106.3)

*How many parents have harmed*  
**the sensibilities of their young children, and have even gone as far as physical aggression, in the pursue of an affair.**

“Instead of praying to God for strength to resist Satan, we suffer our happiness to be marred by trying to stand for what we term “our rights.” Thus we allow Satan a double advantage. We act out our aggrieved feelings, and Satan uses us as his agents to wound and distress those who did not intend to injure us. The requirements of the husband may sometimes seem unreasonable to the wife, when if she should calmly, candidly take the second view of the matter, in as favorable a light for him as possible, she would see that to yield her own way and submit to his judgment, even if it conflicted with her feelings, would save them both from unhappiness and would give them great victory over the temptations of Satan.” (1TT, 106.4)

“I saw that the enemy will contend





either for the usefulness or the life of the godly, and will try to mar their peace as long as they live in this world. But his power is limited. He may cause the furnace to be heated, but Jesus and angels will watch the trusting Christian, that nothing may be consumed but the dross. The fire kindled by Satan can have no power to destroy or hurt the true metal. It is important to close every door possible, against the entrance of Satan. It is the privilege of every family so to live that Satan can take no advantage of anything they may say or do, to tear one another down. Every member of the family should bear in mind that all have just as much as they can do to resist our wily foe, and with earnest prayers and unyielding faith each must rely upon the merits of the blood of Christ and claim His saving strength." (1TT, 107.1)

### **Physical Abandonment**

Many families have suffered the abandonment of one of the spouses, breaking the bond of this sacred unity; likewise, there are ruthless parents who have abandoned their children, and children who have abandoned their parents. This separation wounds and weakens families and, consequently, society. How many parents have harmed the sensibilities of their young children,

and have even gone as far as physical aggression, in the pursue of an affair. What great harm they have done to their children by leaving them unprotected, without education, no food or clothing and without their loving care!

Nevertheless, God is a loving father who loves all those who suffer any outrage caused by a family member, but the promise of our Heavenly Father is: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." (Psalm 27:10, KJV)

### **Family Abandonment Due to Work**

I would like to tackle another momentous aspect. Work, although it is a blessing, is also, to a great extent, a cause of family abandonment. Many children do not see their parents during the day; parents leave early for work when their children are still asleep and return home when they are already asleep. Thus, the children suffer the ruthless loneliness and lack of parental love. Likewise, the wife is affected; she is confined and left alone with the responsibility of educating her children. This is a crime, as we read at the beginning. Another scenario of abandonment due to work happens when the parent leaves the home, the country or place of origin, to "search" for a better future for the family, thus

leaving them in loneliness and abandoning them physically, emotionally and spiritually. Some parents never return from their journey which became uncertain, leaving the children and wife in permanent abandonment. As a result, nowadays, we have many broken families in need of support.

This situation has affected even Christians. Numerous ministers and bible workers have to work in places distant from home, places that are one, two or more days away. This has caused difficulties for all family members. God does not want us to abandon our families. The worker may gain others, but lose his own. Let us remember that, in the end, there will be an important question that we will have to answer: "Where

*Our obligation to our parents*  
**never ceases. Our love for them is not measured by years [...] our responsibility can never be set aside**

is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" (Jeremiah 13:20, KJV)

### **Emotional Abandonment**

God created man as a complex and integral being. Our emotional area includes personal internal states,

motivations, desires, needs, emotions and feelings. Therefore, human beings cannot live without stimuli, we have been created to be motivated and strengthened to survive in community. However, many children, husbands and wives, and parents have been relegated to isolation and emotional neglect. There are no words of praise, no "I love you" or "You are important in my life." Thus, the spouse and/or children feel unwanted, left out, insecure or rejected. Even if the parents are physically present, they remain emotionally absent or disconnected.

The American writer Ellen G. White, expressed the following: "All who profess to be Christ's followers should have command of their own spirit, not allowing themselves to speak fretfully or impatiently. The husband and father should check that impatient word he is about to utter. He should study the effect of his words, lest they leave sadness and a blight." (1TT, 103.2)

"Infirmities and disease especially affect women. The happiness of the family depends much upon the wife and mother. If she is weak and nervous, and is suffered to be overtaxed with labor, the mind becomes depressed, for it sympathizes with the weariness of the body; and then she too often



meets with cold reserve from the husband.” (1TT, 103.3)

### **The considerate husband**

“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” (James 3:2, KJV)

“The husband should manifest great interest in his family. Especially should he be very tender of the feelings of a feeble wife. He can shut the door against much disease. Kind, cheerful, and encouraging words will prove more effective than the most healing medicines. These will bring courage to the heart of the desponding and discouraged, and the happiness and sunshine brought into the family by kind acts and encouraging words will repay the effort tenfold.” (1TT, 104.2)

“The husband should remember that much of the burden of training his children rests upon the mother, that she has much to do with molding their minds.” (1TT, 104.3)

### **An Illustration about Divorce**

The international evangelist Gerhard Hunger, in his book *Ye, Who Are Human*, describes the following illustration that shows us the reality of divorce from the heart of a child:

“Dad, why do you say you're leaving

home? Don't you love me? And if you leave, where will you go? What will become of me? I know you want to leave because you always fight with mom. Oh, oh! What a pain I have in my chest! Why is that? Maybe because I'm going to be left alone. I love you, daddy. Don't go, don't leave me. When I'm alone in my room at night, I cry and cry, thinking that when I wake up you won't be home. How nice it is to be by your side with mom when we go for a walk or when I do my school homework! Daddy, don't go, don't leave me! I will behave myself. Don't fight with mommy. It's so lovely to be together at home...! And the child's voice, choked with tears, stopped as he hugged his daddy tightly.”

This is a very common reality in our society. How many children suffer because of separation due to divorce! Let us pray to the Lord that, with His help, this will never be our case or that of our children.

### **Abandonment by Children to Parents**

“Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.” (Psalm 71:9, KJV). This is King David's prayer to his father God, and God never abandoned him. In the worst trials, and even when his family abandoned him, God was always

faithful to him.

In chapter 59 of Ellen G. White's book *The Adventist Home*, the situation of abandonment of aged parents is addressed:

"Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother.' The obligation resting upon children to honor their parents is of lifelong duration. If the parents are feeble and old, the affection and attention of the children should be bestowed in proportion to the need of father and mother. Nobly, decidedly, the children should shape their course of action even if it requires self-denial, so that every thought of anxiety and perplexity may be removed from the minds of the parents..." (AH, 360.1)

"Children should be educated to love and care tenderly for father and mother. Care for them, children, yourselves; for no other hand can do the little acts of kindness with the acceptance that you can do them. Improve your precious opportunity to scatter seeds of kindness." (AH, 360.2)

"Our obligation to our parents never ceases. Our love for them, and theirs for us, is not measured by years or distance, and our responsibility can never be set aside." (AH, 360.3)

### **Smooth the Pathway**

"After children grow to years of maturity, some of them think their duty is done in providing an abode

for their parents. While giving them food and shelter, they give them no love or sympathy. In their parents' old age, when they long for expression of affection and sympathy, children heartlessly deprive them of their attention. There is no time when children should withhold respect and love from their father and mother. While the parents live, it should be the children's joy to honor and respect them. They should bring all the cheerfulness and sunshine into the life of the aged parents that they possibly can. They should smooth their pathway to the grave. There is no better recommendation in this world than that a child has honored his parents, no better record in the books of heaven than that he has loved and honored father and mother." (AH, 360.5)

### **Misguided Refuge**

Nowadays, most children and teenagers are immersed in technology; it has become essential to live connected to virtual reality through the Internet. Life becomes boring without social networks, as these are the ones that keep almost everyone informed and entertained. This can be a momentary escape, a misguided refuge to "survive" the sadness caused by abandonment in its different natures and the lack of love, care and attention they need.



However, young children are not aware of the dangers of excessive and constant use of social networks. There are many parents who, in an effort to keep them entertained, provide their children with cell phones, tablets or computers, while they work and are absent. These children and young people take refuge, most of the time, in the dangerous Internet. This is also typified as children abandonment, as they are left alone and secluded, without any parental affection and

growing up isolated and without guidance. The Holy Bible advises parents: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6, KJV)

Dear parents, our greatest responsibility in our home and before God is that our families remain united and blissful. Dear children, remember that the only safe refuge is to count on our friend Jesus Christ. May God greatly bless all families is my wish and prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.



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May 12th  
FRIDAY



## *My Children, My Responsibility*

Pr. Douglas Francis  
Sri Lanka

### **Marriage Is a Blessing**

In the book of Genesis, in chapters one and two, God revealed His blueprint for marriage. The plan calls for the wedding to be a covenant for life. Life is exclusively designed for the union of mutual union and companionship between one man and one woman. Jesus acknowledged this creation plan, and we read in Matthew 19:4-6: "And He answered and said to them, 'have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female,' and said, 'for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So, then, they

are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.'" We must rediscover and reaffirm God's design in our time. Profound in its simplicity, it needs no updating, no retouching, and it needs living! The common saying, "*marriages may be made in heaven,*" leaves a reality that married life is on earth. The fact remains that there are no perfect marriages. Marriages must be grown and progress over time as two individuals with independent personalities try to discover their common ground. Married people eventually find troublesome factors in their relationship that need

amendments. Yet, any existing conflict or problem does not necessarily indicate a failed marriage. These conflicts could be resolved amicably. But, when these problems and disputes are not fixed, they grow over time, and a visible divorce can become an attractive choice.

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, we read, “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

### **Unwise Engagement**

“Even if an engagement has been entered into without a full understanding of the character of the one with whom you intend to unite, do not think that the engagement makes it a positive necessity for you to take upon yourself the marriage vow and link yourself for life to one whom you cannot love and respect. Be very careful how you enter conditional engagements, but better, far better,

break the engagement before marriage than separate afterward, as many do.” (*Counsels for the Church*, page 123.3).

### **Is Marriage a Blessing?**

The marriage bonding and togetherness are unmatched. But “how far the marriage is workable and divorce-proof?” is the biggest question to find answers to. In general, Satan tries to destroy many marriages in several ways, such as neglect, sins, adultery, blame, selfishness, unreasonable anger, secrets, prayerlessness and weak spiritual standard, bad habits, financial conflicts, crises, offspring, and problems related with relatives, and finally divorce. It is always advisable to avoid a divorce, and perhaps someone might say it is inevitable. So, a present divorce could have been avoided if the relevant parties had used the opportunity to separate before marriage.

“He [Satan] is busily engaged in influencing those who are wholly unsuited to each other to unite their interests. He exults in this work, for by it he can produce more misery and hopeless woe to the human family than by exercising his skill in any other direction.” (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol., 2, page 248.)

“Too often the marriage relation is entered into without proper consideration. None should marry in uncertainty. But if they have not been properly considerate in this matter, and after marriage find themselves dissimilar in character, and liable to reap unhappiness in the place of joy, let them not breathe into another's mind the fact that their marriage was unwise...” (In Heavenly Place, page 205.2). After all, the marriage took place, and it is

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time to maintain it as far as possible! Therefore, the starting place is not documenting problems but clarifying each person's commitment to the relationship. We should not seek justifications for leaving a marriage but rather seek clarification about the functionality of the marriage. So, what defines a functional marriage? A successful marriage is ultimately determined by shared commitment, and it begins with the wedding vows and is

maintained through continual expressions of loyalty. Shortcomings can be corrected if one is willing to grow.

### **Why Do Unhappy Homes Exist?**

Unfortunately, the more significant number of homes do not conform to God's plan for them. Many homes are broken already with the father and mother separated. The children's experience of home is their parents constantly quarrel, and many are too busy with other things to care appropriately for their children. In some homes, the children are grown to be disrespectful, sometimes scorning and hating their parents. In some, the children are lonely, unloved, and untrained. Satan's plan for our homes seems too often to succeed.

### **What Is God's Plan for the Christian Home?**

Many families like to build enclosures around their homes, such as hedges, stone walls, and fences of different kinds. As such, God, too, is ready to surround each home with His protecting divine love. God guards these homes with a band of angels who protect our little ones and ourselves from temptations and dangers. God will send His Holy Spirit into the seeking





homes, and its influence will soften tempers, dispel jealousy, and ease tensions.

In such homes, the children will be the joy and happiness of their parents and will honor and respect them all their days.

The parents should not separate themselves for long due to economic reasons such as business, job, etc. The mother cannot do the father's duty towards children. Only by working together, father and mother can accomplish the responsibility towards their family, especially towards the children, and can also achieve the work God has given into their hands.

### **Children Are a Blessing**

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” (Psalm 127:3). Children are gracious gifts from the Lord, and the blessings will be more precious when they are an inheritance to Godly parents. However, *if we want our children to be a real blessing to the family and others, we must take the time to train them.*

### **Training of Children Is Necessary**

“It is the duty of parents to educate and discipline their children from their earliest years. They should seek to kindly and tenderly lead them to

Jesus, and impress upon the children the fact that they are anxious to secure the blessing of God upon their little ones. Parents should feel the necessity of this as much as did the mothers who brought their children to Jesus to receive His blessing.” (*Signs of The Times*, August 13, 1896).

The parents need to train the children in areas such as obedience, honor, respect for elders, handling of property, being thankful to the Lord, gratefulness, care for others, humility, and manners. Both parents should have strategic planning when it comes to the training of their little ones. It has to start in much earlier years of the children's lives, but not too late.

“Too much importance cannot be placed upon the early training of children. The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years.” (*Ministry of Healing*, page 380.2).

### **Visible Negligence**

Today, many parents have deviated from biblical and ethical standards, rules, and expectations while maintaining a more relaxed

approach. They overlook or tolerate the most sinful and unbecoming behaviors, hoping their children will grow out of their selfishness or accept their ill behavior as normal for children. They turn a blind eye in the name of grace but do not stop to correct or instruct in the proper behavior, and this is the problem. Unfortunately, the current parental advice gurus are touting grace over discipline, nurture over structure, and acceptance over expectations for behavior pleasing to the Lord.

## **How Could We Manage Our Children?**

**1. Make learning a pleasure** – Children learn more readily and quickly if they gain happiness from experience. Parents should closely watch their children and should identify their interests. When the parents provide specific tasks to the children according to the taste of the children, they find pleasure when engaged in such tasks. When the children work happily for us, the habit of helpfulness has strengthened.

**2. Help the children learn through imitation** – When the parents engage in specific tasks with no hazardous risks involved, the children should be allowed to

participate in those tasks along with the parents. This way, children will try to imitate their parents and learn to perform tasks themselves.

**3. Allowing the children to make their own experience** – Children should be allowed to make their own experience. When they touch the ice, they feel it is chilly, and when they approach fire (perhaps under the supervision of the parents), they feel hot, and it is not safe for them to touch it. Likewise, in many ways, the parents might allow the children to make their own experiences in life. But the parents need to be cautious and considerate regarding risk factors.

**4. Encourage the children to ask questions from the parents and provide reasonable answers** – If the parents take time to listen to the children and their questions, they will develop confidence in their parents and ask many questions. These questions may decide the children's destiny, depending on how the parents handle the children. Children will confidently ask about their life decisions when they grow into adolescence.

**5. Providing suggestions to the children** – Sometimes the children



may not ask their parents directly of any question. In this case, if the parents are aware of any matter the child is struggling with, the parents may provide suggestions to the children. The children will take a liking and develop a bond with the parents when they identify the parent's concerns.

**6. The children should be taught about God's help in daily life** – The children should be educated and trained to be thankful to God for all His providences. The children must learn to acknowledge that all we receive is from God, and we need to be grateful.

We must understand that each child is unique and may not have very common elements similar to each other, though they are simply to be siblings.

### **Help the Children to Form the Right Habits**

The time to train plants, animals, and children is when they are young. If a young tree has bent crooked in the wind, it is easy to straighten it up. Likewise, children should be taught about good habits while they are small or young.

The example of the parents is very important for the children. The right habits could be developed in the children when we allow the children

to observe the parents. In this way, the parents' example helps the children adopt good habits.

### **Guidance, not Leniency**

Some parents consider being very severe with their children will make the children behave appropriately. They do this because they do not know any other method. But on the contrary, Eli (the high priest), his children, and their wishes became their family's law. Eli and his wife did not build into their children's lives the kind of characters they needed for life. Of such children, the testimony says, "Everything he dislikes he is encouraged to dislike. These indulgences are supposed to make the child happy, but it is these very things that make him restless, discontented, and satisfied with nothing. Indulgence has spoiled his appetite for plain, healthful food, for the plain, healthful use of his time; gratification has done the work of unsettling that character for time and for eternity." (*Child Guidance*, page 272.4).

Love is essential, but it must be coupled with restraint. Not one wrong act should go uncorrected, whether it be a disobedient act or an untruth told to either parent or anyone else.

## **Obedience Should Be Made Pleasant**

The parents are so happy when they see that their children are obedient. But the parents must help the children choose to obey. Parents do not like to force their children to desire obedience, and the parents must make it a pleasant thing to obey. If the parents follow specific rules and precepts, the children will more willingly obey the parents' commands.

Rule one – Have a pleasant voice.

Rule two – Use simple and pleasant commands.

Rule three – Give incentives.

Rule four – The commands should be positive.

Rule five – Allow the child to have confident choices.

Rule six – Give few or no commands to children who are sick and tired. They need love and care.

Rule seven – Consider the dislikes of the children.

Rule eight – Choose the best time to give the command.

Rule nine – Do not use so many “Don'ts.”

Rule ten – Have confidence in children and expect obedience.

Rule eleven – Try to understand the children well.

Rule twelve – Try to be close to the child.

*Let the hearts of parents be*  
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way to the heart.**

Rule thirteen – Always remember the commands and do not forget them.

“Help the child to see that parents and teachers are representatives of God, and that, as they act in harmony with Him, their laws in the home and the school are also His. As the child is to render obedience to parents and teachers, so they, in turn, are to render obedience to God.” (*Education*, page 287.3)

### **A Real Problem**

Even after our careful and prayerful training of our children, what if a son or a daughter has wandered away from the straight and narrow path and subsequently fallen into sin? For example, what if it concerns the seventh commandment? What a painful and humiliating experience it is for the family! In the first place, it is required that the parents must seek exceptional help from Heaven. The parents must plead on their knees and ask for divine help and guidance.

Secondly, the parents must get closer to the son or daughter and help them to realize their fault and forgive them as parents and family. In this way, the family can secure the son or daughter and help them understand Christianity's foundation, which is fundamentally established on forgiveness of sin through Christ.

"I see the necessity of parents dealing in the wisdom of Christ with their erring children... It is the unpromising ones who need the greatest patience and kindness, the most tender sympathy. But many parents reveal a cold, unpitying spirit, which will never lead the erring to repentance. Let the hearts of parents be softened by the grace of Christ, and His love will find a way to the heart." (*Child Guidance*, page 260.1).

Sometimes, the child might need medical assistance, or legal assistance in some instances. As parents, it is necessary to face all these mandatory requirements legally, according to the principles of faith, with patience.

Why do I undergo all these procedures, training, and sacrifices as a parent toward the child?

### **My Children, My Responsibility**

"Parents, you carry responsibilities that no one can bear for you. As long as you live, you are accountable to God to keep His way... Parents who make the word of God their guide, and who realize how much their children depend upon them for the characters they form, will set an example that it will be safe for their children to follow." (*Adventist Home*, page 187.1).

Do we think that we have fulfilled our duty to our children when we have provided them with food, clothing, and shelter? Many parents do not comprehend any other need for their children. Because they grow up physically, will they naturally grow up spiritually? No. Many persons who have grown up with solid bodies have no spiritual "house." They are still spiritual babies without homes where the Holy Spirit of God can dwell.

"Fathers and mothers are responsible for the health, the constitution, the development of the character of their children. No one else should be left to see to this work. In becoming the parents of children, it devolves upon you to cooperate with the Lord in educating them in sound principles." (*Adventist Home*, page 187.2).

**When God Asks, 'Where Are the Children?'**

“Parents who have neglected their God-given responsibilities must meet that neglect in the judgment. The Lord will then inquire, 'Where are the children that I gave you to train for Me? Why are they not at My right hand?' Many parents will then see that unwise love blinded their eyes to their children's faults and left those children to develop deformed characters unfit for heaven. Others will see that they did not give their children time and attention, love and tenderness; their own neglect of

duty made the children what they are.” (*Child Guidance*, page 561.1).

“Parents, if you lose your opportunity, God pity you; for in the day of judgment God will say, 'What have you done with My flock, My beautiful flock?'...” (*Child Guidance*, page 561.2).

Let us build into the lives of our children honest, upright characters. We would develop a love for God in their hearts and we also would teach them to do the right things first, thus, we will help them build and grow the “temple”. Amen.



## *Rescuing Our Children*

**Pr. Pablo Hunger**  
USA

“For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.” Jeremiah 31:11

Every stage of life has wonderful experiences. The youthhood, a stage full of energy, is the flower of life. Wedding and marriage, being in love and arriving together at the altar to start married life, is the beginning of the family nest stage. But life really changes when children arrive! It is an entirely new stage in married life. Children bring incredible joy, a warmth in the family, and a new sense to the word “family”. It is no longer my wife or I, but rather our children that become the center of everything.

A few weeks ago, we spent time with a family that just had their first child. Every concern was focused on the little child: did he have his coat, did he eat, did he sleep enough, was he cared for, etc. Marriage undergoes a broad readjustment with the arrival of a child. While all of this takes work, it brings much happiness to the home.

The reality is that when children grow up, the greatest desire or satisfaction of a father and mother is to see their children achieve success in life. As a father, I often think about my children's decisions and want them to be given to God as they make Him a priority in their lives. I pray that their careers may be successful and that they have a



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united and happy marriage with a partner who is a strong spiritual and moral support in their lives.

But, is a child's success only achieved by providing them with shelter, food, and perhaps higher education? Every child has the right of love, care, education, and protection from their parents, but these elements are not the only ones to take into account regarding a child's success.

I remember a story I read in the news about a pair of young twins. On the day of their 18th birthday, they decided to take their own lives by overdosing on medication. It was a morning like every other. The father and mother rushed to work very early in the morning, forgetting to greet their children on their birthday. In the afternoon, the parents received a call from the police telling them that their children were both at the hospital in a very serious state. Someone had been taking a walk in the forest near the town and found both young men lying unconscious on the ground. Emergency services were alerted who took them to the hospital, where they were quickly diagnosed with drug overdose. The medics rapidly started treatments to RESCUE the boys. After hearing the news, the father rushed to the hospital to see his children. One of them had just woken up and the first thing he asked was if his brother, the

only one he shared all his worries and loneliness with, survived. Unfortunately, the other brother lost his life. The father asked his surviving son why they had done such a crazy thing?! To this, the young man replied, that they felt alone in life, that they didn't have support from anyone, not even their parents, and that they decided to commit suicide. The surprised father answered: "But son, we do everything for you! You always have food, you have a safe roof over you, you have received the

*During our conversations,*

**we must also dedicate time to pray with them in private to bring their challenges into God's hands.**

best education, you have a computer and other material goods, so, if we have given you everything, what do you still need? The son replied that they wanted a father and mother who listen to them, who have time for them, who are dedicated to being their friends, and who advise them and talk to them. The sad reality is that this experience is very common in most homes. Children grow up being influenced at school by their teachers, and mostly, by non-believing friends. What can





we expect from such development? Parents want their children to be successful, but perhaps, they are not correctly investing in the values necessary to RESCUE their children from the hands of the enemy.

### **A Competition with the Devil**

“There is no work more important than the education of our youth...Brethren and sisters, do not hold yourselves aloof from the youth, as if you had no particular concern or responsibility for them. You who have long professed to be Christians have a work to do, patiently and kindly to lead them in the right way. You should show them that you love them because they are younger members of the Lord's family, the purchase of His blood. The future of society will be determined by the youth of today. Satan is making earnest, persevering efforts to corrupt the mind and debase the character of every youth; and shall we who have more experience stand as mere spectators, and see him accomplish his purpose without hindrance? Let us stand at our post as minutemen, to work for these youth, and through the help of God to hold them back from the pit of destruction.” – Counsels for Teachers p. 45-47

If Satan makes ardent and persevering efforts, how much more should we endeavor to RESCUE our

children? It is time to take a firm decision and to change our relationship with our children.

Let's look at some important points that we must be mindful of to RESCUE our children.

### **Take Time to Talk with Your Children**

I don't doubt the fact that parents love their children, but sometimes, children doubt our love for them. It is said that if we love something, we should dedicate time to it, and yet, many times, we ignore our children's joyful moments during the week, overlook the worries that burden them, don't see the challenges they face in their studies, underestimate their efforts at work, etc., because we simply don't talk to them enough. This causes them to feel a certain emptiness and loneliness in life. We need to pause our busy lives and practically show our children that we love them.

Just as the young twin who wanted to take his life needed his parents attention, likewise, our children need our time. If we have an open dialogue with our children, then we will have the opportunity to advise them on their many needs and guide them along safer paths. That is why, dear father and mother, set aside time each week to talk with your children. Even if it is just a few minutes, take the time to have a conversation with your child before

going to bed and ask them how their day was, etc. You can also set aside time during your day off to talk to each child privately. Be mindful that talking to them at the table or at worship is not the same as having a personal conversation with each child.

During our conversations, we must also dedicate time to pray with them in private to bring their challenges into God's hands. Our children must understand that, although we are parents, we also have limits, make mistakes, and need God's guidance.

### **Being Friends with Our Children**

A friend is a person who stays close to us through thick and thin. A friend is a person whom we have fun with and create pleasant memories with. A friend is the person we look for when we need advice because we do not have the confidence to ask just anyone. A friend is the person who knows our secrets.

But how do we become friends with our children? For this too, we need time. If we start having personal conversations with our children, then we are already on the right track. But just having dialogues won't cut it. We must undertake activities that make our children happy. There are a vast variety of things we can do with our children to grow closer to them. Why not have some recreational time during your

weekly day off, or make dinner together, play a game together, go for a walk on the beach together, play sports together, or do a project together like building a doghouse or making decorative art for the house together, etc.? You should ask your children what they want to do with you and maybe give them some ideas. These activities become pleasant moments where hearts come together in friendship.

### **Firm in Principle, but Close to the Children**

We shouldn't only spend moments of fun and recreation with our children. We must try to be friends with our children, being those good friends who help us when we are in danger by giving us the advice we need even if we may not like it. We may be friends with our children but are also their parents. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee **rest**; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." (Proverbs 29:15, 17).

Let us strive to create a relationship with our children where there is a firmness in principles that will not change over the years. Be mindful that just because your children become of age as adults doesn't mean that they can do whatever they want in our home. Principles



should always remain firm and applicable as long as we are together. Nevertheless, you should wear your heart on your sleeve, and, at times, share your tears with your child when you are truly worried about them. We must be firm, but not militaristic with our children. Excess harshness does not create friendships. Instead, it separates us and creates resentment. If there is firmness but an open and friendly dialogue, you can analyze any problems together, and reason why certain disciplinary measures are taken on different occasions. These are difficult moments that must be undertaken with great care, not forgetting the importance of prayer. With God's help, we will reach the hearts of our children in times of correction and firmness.

Let us also remember that actions speak louder than words. We must be the example that our children need and the inspiration that will lead them to want to live like you do. If for some reason, a child has taken the decision to distance themselves from us due to different values, then we must remember that they are still our child. We must love them more, consistently help them, and always be willing to serve them despite our differences. Distancing ourselves from certain mistakes and not allowing them in our home, does not mean that you should distance

yourself from your children. On the contrary, you must show them more love, attention, and service, to reach the hearts of your children as their Mother or Father.

### **Be Attentive During the Scholastic Years**

When our children begin their educational endeavors, much of the teaching is passed on from the parents to teachers or professors and through the influence of peers and friends. Because of this, it is very important that parents accompany their children throughout their scholastic development. This implies constantly informing themselves on the subject the children are studying to be able to advise them when the topics become contradictory to our Christian values. We live in times where new principles and values that are not approved by the word of God are introduced every day. An example of this is gender ideology, evolution, psychology, clothing, food, etc. If we are establishing Christian values and following up on our children's studies, we will be able to give them answers and strengthen them in conflicting issues to thus counteract bad influences.

On the other hand, it is important to know who their friends are at school. We should meet the students who are closest to our children and invite them into our homes to see what

influence they give our children to consequently also help them. If our

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children spend time with their friends in our home, we can observe them and help them. If they spend time in another home, we can not see what influence they are receiving there. Never allow your children to spend a night away from home with friends, extended family, or unsuspecting people, if it isn't for an emergency.

I encourage parents to consider homeschooling or online school. This must be done wholeheartedly, dedicatedly, and with discipline. It is a highly recommended pathway, because it will bring many advantages to your children, and will avoid any corrupting influences that exist in public school environments. Additionally, we should help our children have Christian friends and good relations with other young people of our faith, so that they can find an identity in friends who will help them take decisions for eternity.

If parents don't have a close relationship with their children, then, in many cases, the influence of friends will be far greater during the adolescent years. That is why it is so important to always know who our children are with, and what they are doing.

### **Avoiding Idle Time**

The adolescent and youth years are the best ages to learn, develop talents, and master a trade. As long as a young person is busy studying, developing their talents, learning music, learning an instrument, learning a trade, and learning other practical arts, they will have less time to be idle. When young people have too much free time, they will likely occupy it with practices that offend God. For example, learning music, if guided correctly, not only gives them the opportunity to develop a talent for the glory of God, but also increases brain development and improves academic performance because of the techniques that are used in music performance.

Learning a new instrument or creating art can easily be boring and tiring. As parents, we must encourage our children to not stop practicing and to keep taking lessons even though they are struggling with it. We must constantly motivate and encourage them to advance in these important goals.



It is during idle time that young people try vices with their friends, or spend time gambling, which also becomes a vice, and then they get into other dangers that are hard to stop later on.

Let's not forget that the devil is looking for opportunities to destroy our children's lives, and as parents, we must thus avoid any situations that may affect the development of our children.

### **Help Them Decided for a Career**

How many young people reach the age of deciding for a career and don't know what to do? Here again, your children's friends have a great influence on this career decision. As parents, we should observe our children's gifts and talents to advise them to expand on areas that best suit them. Many times, our children learn the talent that we as parents have, which is good. But we can not ask them to do what we want them to do, or what we would have liked to do as young people, because it may frustrate their desires, as often happens. We should counsel and guide our children so that they can develop their gifts in a career or profession that pleases God.

### **Advise them in Finding a Spouse**

As parents, we should observe our children in the development of their emotions.

When they reach adolescence, children often have moments where they are attracted to the opposite sex. If they give in to their emotions, they may make a mistake that they will regret the rest of their lives. We should thus accompany our children constantly throughout their friendships and contact with others because, even churchgoers, who have not been converted, pose a danger for our children.

If our children are not enough yet mature to take serious decisions about the future, if they don't have enough financial stability to support themselves, and if they are not ready for marriage, then, as parents, we should help them avoid close relationships with the opposite sex. We must guide our children's emotions and help them not make mistakes they will regret. To do this, we must be very close to our children, and become their best friends and counselors.

When a mature age arrives, as their counselors, we can recommend good friendships and guide our children to look for important talents and good character traits in others. Perhaps we can even help them analyze certain facets of life that are important to create happiness in their future homes.

### **Constantly Motivate their Spiritual Life**

Above all, let us remind our children of the beautiful promises in the Holy Scriptures: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13), "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him" (Lamentations 3:25), "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31), "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5).

If we don't include God, respect for the Creator of life, and daily spiritual habits in our children's lives, then we won't achieve the results we desire. Morning and evening worship with the family is one of the habits God established for the home. We should

work on our spiritual lives and constantly encourage our children to devote time to personally study the Holy Scriptures. Fearing God should not just be a motivation of words. Let us create a habit in our homes where we come together on an assigned day to hear a summary of our children's thoughts on their daily reading with God. These regular habits help strengthen and establish solid foundations in our children's lives.

If we have neglected these practical tips in our homes, then it's time to take the firm decision of rescuing our children from the hands of the enemy. Let us prepare them for success in this life, and especially, for the soon coming of our Lord. As long as there is life, it is never too late to turn to God. May God bless every parent in their higher calling of educating their children for eternity!



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May 14th  
SUNDAY

## *Educating Responsible Young People*

**Sister Tatiana Sanchez**  
England

Responsibility is a personal characteristic of a person, describing his or her ability to thoroughly analyse a situation, predict the consequences of his or her actions in advance and make conscious decisions based on a willingness to accept the consequences of his or her choices. Responsibility is a characteristic of a spiritually and morally mature person. As any other character feature, responsibility does not appear in a person by itself. This quality develops as a result of consistent education and nurturing, purposeful efforts and work.

Let's reflect today on how to develop responsibility among Christian youth, considering

what is needed for the younger generation to grow spiritually responsible within the modern world. Let us list the necessary conditions for personal responsibility among young people.

In the Bible we can find many examples of both responsible and irresponsible young people. Daniel and his three friends, Joseph, Esther, Gideon, Samuel, Miriam and Timothy are some examples to follow. On the other hand, Samson, Dinah, Rehoboam, Amnon, Cain and Absalom failed because of their careless and irresponsible actions. And both lists could go on and on.

Spiritually responsible youth is



*Do not think the Bible*

**will become a tiresome book to the children. Under a wise instructor the work will become more and more desirable.**

the result of the hard work of parents, children, the church and the Holy Spirit together. It is the result of many prayers of mothers, fathers, children, youth and pastors. It is the result of struggling with temptation, laziness, pride, appetite and self.

The wise Solomon, addressing the youth, writes, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." (Ecclesiastes 11:9) In this short verse is the essence of responsibility: each person must understand that for each of his works he will receive a reward according to his deeds. But then Ecclesiastes urges: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

The apostle John writes in his first

epistle, chapter two, verse fourteen: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." This is exactly what the Lord wants to see in today's young people as well - victorious over the evil one. But have you noticed the sequence in this verse? First the apostle says to the young men - "you are strong": yes, that is true - youth is strength. But it is not enough. That strength must be channelled into the right direction - "the word of God abides in you". The result of this, the result of dedication to God, the result of studying God's word is victory over the evil one.

Childhood, youth and young adulthood are above all a time of preparation for life, a time to learn. On the foundation laid in youth, one will build his whole life. And the only solid foundation is Christ, the rock. His life must be studied, the Bible and the books of the Spirit of Prophecy must be studied now, when we are young, while there is more time for it. All this knowledge will be useful later on in life.

Youth is a special, beautiful time of life, full of inspiration, strength, energy and plans for the future. Dedicated, responsible young people can do so much for the Lord.

Dear young people and children, may you never have a single idle,





aimless minute in your life. May your life be filled with useful and interesting activities, so that you have no time to be idle. Participation in church services, working with children, music ministry, missionary work, service to the poor, needy, orphans and outcasts, housework and faithful accomplishment of the tasks given by the parents - there will be work for everyone according to their abilities, their heart and possibilities. If you enjoy cooking healthy food - do a workshop at the weekend and invite your neighbours over. If you like working with children, organise a children's camp over the holidays. If you have an aptitude for languages - learn a new foreign language so you can serve another nation. Or maybe together with an orchestra and a choir you could visit the local prison? Or give your mum a nice surprise by getting the house in perfect order when she arrives? There are many ideas and you can find a great use for your talents and strengths. God's work needs young, energetic people on whom you can rely. To succeed in proclaiming the last message for a lost world, you need to combine the knowledge and experience of the older generation with the energy and enthusiasm of young people. By carrying out small tasks honestly and conscientiously, you are preparing

for more difficult ones and gaining experience. With time you will be able to carry more and more responsibilities and be of use in the field of God. On the last day the Lord will say to such youth, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matthew 25:21)

Where does the education of responsible children and young people begin? The answer is simple: with responsible parents. When parents are aware of their duty to God and do everything necessary on their part, the Lord rewards the efforts of godly parents.

It is very important that young people study God's will regarding the criteria to follow to find a couple, as well as how to start a family and bring up children. It is essential to be aware of God's requirements and responsibilities that parents have for the children entrusted to them by Him, when they are still young.

Parents are channels who are connected with one side to the Great Source of Living Water and with the other side to their children. If we ourselves feed regularly on God's Word, we will have something to share with our children: clean life-giving water, by which our children will grow like trees "planted by the

streams of waters" (Psalm 1:3). If parents are connected to the wrong source, then they pass dirty, stinking water to their children and the fruits will be likewise. If the connection with the Source is for some reason broken and the parents are gradually turned into dry channels that give nothing to the children, then the enemy quickly finds something to replace the living water source for the children.

Undoubtedly, the personal example of parents is also important. One of the main reasons why the children of believing parents do not stay in church is hypocrisy. It happens that parents teach their children the right thing, but do not act as they teach them. The children, seeing the discrepancy between what they say and what they do, do not take their instructions seriously and are unlikely to follow them.

"There can be no more important work than the proper education of our youth. We must guard them, fighting back Satan, that he shall not take them out of our arms." 1MCP 200.4

Two main areas in the upbringing of children need special attention: the spiritual-moral and the practical, that is physical.

The basis of spiritual and moral Christian education in the family is always the Bible, the Word of God,

supported by the inspired counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy.

"Above all other books, the word of God must be our study, the great textbook, the basis of all education; and our children are to be educated in the truths found therein." 6T 131.3

"Do not think the Bible will become a tiresome book to the children. Under a wise instructor the work will become more and more desirable. It will be to them as the bread of life, and will never grow old."—MS.,

*Parents, be vigilant, very vigilant.*  
**because the enemy does  
not sleep and is always  
trying to find a way  
to get to your  
child's heart**

December 15, 1897. PH124 11.5

"While the Bible should hold the first place in the education of children and youth, the book of nature is next in importance." CT 185.1

It is important that Bible study is accompanied by visual lessons from nature. And when a child encounters various objects, facts or phenomena of nature, a wise mother or father will show him their relationship to principles from the Word of God. Thus, the study of these two textbooks runs parallel to each

other. And just as Christ used illustrative examples from nature in His parables, parents can also interest their inquisitive toddlers or teenage children in the various parallels between the Bible and nature.

In early childhood, up to the age of nine or ten or more, children should be brought up and educated at home, in the family. "The father and the mother should be the first teachers of their children." CG 21.1 A child's first teacher is the Christian mother who has the most important job in the world: raising up future missionaries and servants of God; raising up citizens for the heavenly kingdom. At an older age, education for teenagers must also be carefully chosen, giving preference to home schooling or church schools, where the pernicious influences of a decaying society can be avoided. Online distance learning is widespread these days. In some cases this may be a suitable option if there is no church school nearby, but one should always be aware of the dangers that go along with it because of using modern technology and so, to take the necessary steps of prevention.

If a family follows the Lord's advice and settles away from the cities, as close to nature as possible, the work of raising children will be much

easier in the surroundings of God's creation and simple way of life. Life in today's cities does not meet these requirements and so the call is very serious: parents, save your children, take them out of the cities!

"Let parents understand that the training of their children is an important work in the saving of souls. In country places abundant, useful exercise will be found in doing those things that need to be done, and which will give physical health by developing nerve and muscle. "Out of the cities" is my message for the education of our children." 2SM 355.2

"God gave to our first parents the means of true education when He instructed them to till the soil and care for their garden home. After sin came in, through disobedience to the Lord's requirements, the work to be done in cultivating the ground was greatly multiplied, for the earth, because of the curse, brought forth weeds and thistles. But the employment itself was not given because of sin. The great Master Himself blessed the work of tilling the soil." 2SM 355.3

"It is Satan's purpose to attract men and women to the cities, and to gain his object he invents every kind of novelty and amusement, every kind of excitement. And the cities of the earth today are becoming as were

the cities before the Flood..." 2SM 355.4

Here we need to pay attention to the fact that life in our world has changed considerably in the last few decades. The widespread availability of the internet and modern technology has made it so that even in rural areas there can be access to online entertainment and depravity. Therein lies the specificity of our times: it's not enough to take families away from the cities, we need to prevent the enemy from infiltrating our homes and the hearts of our children in various cunning and insidious ways. And this really requires wisdom from high to recognise the danger on time and prevent it.

Electronic games on the computer or phone, seemingly harmless cartoons and other endless videos, numerous social media posts with questionable content, aggressive and intrusive advertisements for porn sites, heavy rock or frivolous music are just some of the modern nets that the enemy throws in to trap and ruin our children, teens and young adults. Even adults are often caught up in online addiction, not to mention inexperienced children and young people.

"It is the duty of the youth to encourage sobriety." 2T 236.2

Parents, if you care about the eternal

destiny of your children, be especially vigilant about your children's use of phones, tablets and computers. Childhood is the foundation of a character that will be reflected later in youth and throughout life. Don't give your young child a phone and cartoons just to keep it from bothering you. Keep your children away from electronic technology and the internet for as long as possible. If at an older age it becomes necessary to use them for distance learning - then you must make sure that these things are used strictly for their intended purpose. Gaming devices and computer games in general should have no place at all in the home. They steal from children and young people their precious time to prepare for life, develop in them an almost insurmountable addiction and lead their minds to degradation and their souls to ruin. Do not allow your children and teenagers to register on social media and communicate there uncontrollably. Love and romantic movies, pornography and related to that depravity and masturbation, are very serious instruments that the devil is quietly using to lead young people to ruin from the comfort of their own homes. What Ellen White wrote about books and lowbrow novels now applies even more to

movies, films and other videos.

“The young are in great danger. Great evil results from their light reading. Much time is lost which should be spent in useful employment. Some would even deprive themselves of sleep to finish some ridiculous love story. The world is flooded with novels of every description. Some are not of as dangerous a character as others. Some are immoral, low, and vulgar; others are clothed with more refinement; but all are pernicious in their influence. Oh, that the young would reflect upon the influence which exciting stories have upon the mind! Can you, after such reading, open the word of God and read the words of life with interest? Do you not find the book of God uninteresting? The charm of that love story is upon the mind, destroying its healthy tone, and making it impossible for you to fix your mind upon the important, solemn truths which concern your eternal interest. You sin against your parents in devoting to such a poor purpose the time which belongs to them, and you sin against God in thus using the time which should be spent in devotion to Him.” 2T 236.1

Parents, be vigilant, very vigilant, because the enemy does not sleep and is always trying to find a way to get to your child’s heart. If your

children are young, it is much easier to prevent the addiction than to get rid of it later. But if it already exists with a teenager, it is still never too late to plead to God for help and cleanse your home of idols, as Jacob did (Genesis 35:2-4).

We have been given a beautiful promise:

“Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” (Isaiah 49:24-25)

“Guard your children from every objectionable influence possible; for in childhood they are more ready to receive impressions, either of moral dignity, purity, and loveliness of character, or of selfishness, impurity, and disobedience.” AH 469.3

“If right habits are formed and right principles established, there is earnest work to be done. If wrong habits are corrected, diligence and perseverance are required to accomplish the task.” AH 468.4

“Children should be trained and educated so that they may calculate to meet with difficulties and expect temptations and dangers. They should be taught to have control over themselves and to nobly

overcome difficulties; and if they do not wilfully rush into danger and needlessly place themselves in the way of temptation, if they avoid evil influences and vicious society, and then are unavoidably compelled to be in dangerous company, they will have strength of character to stand for the right and preserve principle and will come forth in the strength of God with their morals untainted. The moral powers of youth who have been properly educated, if they make God their trust, will be equal to stand the most powerful test." AH 471.1

In addition to the spiritual, the practical side of life must also be considered. From an early age, children should be taught responsibility in daily tasks, according to their age, by giving tasks according to their abilities and then requiring a report on the work done. In this way, by carrying out the smallest and seemingly insignificant

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tasks, children prepare themselves to take on more serious

responsibilities. Consistency and permanence on the part of parents play a very important role in education. And the efforts made on the part of young people to acquire the necessary skills will be rewarded in the future with abundant blessings in their lives. Idleness, indolence and laziness have no place in Christian homes. Every activity should be useful and directed to the service of others, as it was in the life of Jesus Christ when he lived on earth.

"If these young men would be a blessing anywhere, it should be at home. If they yield to inclination, instead of being guided by the cautious decision of sober reason, sound judgment, and enlightened conscience, they cannot be a blessing to society or to their father's family, and their prospects in this world and in the better world may be endangered." MYP 339.3

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By working in this way, parents lay a solid foundation of lifelong faith in their children. With confidence in God and a correct understanding of purpose and meaning in life, young people can become mature and responsible men and women who can be relied upon. The Lord can use them in His work, in building up the church and in spreading the Three Angels' message.

Ellen White writes a lot about and for young people in her writings; through the Spirit of Prophecy we are given a lot of advice for the upbringing of the younger generation. Parents, teachers, children and young people need to study these tips carefully and prayerfully every day to know exactly God's way and will. "Messages to Young People", "Education", "The Adventist Home", "Child Guidance", "Christian Education", "Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students", "An Appeal to Mothers" and many other books of the Spirit of Prophecy should become daily reading books in our homes.

"If the youth could only see how much good it is in their power to accomplish, if they would make God their strength and wisdom, they would no longer pursue a course of careless indifference toward Him; they would no longer be swayed by the influence of those who are unconsecrated. Instead of feeling that an individual responsibility rests upon them to put forth efforts to do others good, and lead others to righteousness, they give themselves up to seek their own amusement. They are useless members of society, and live as aimless lives as do the butterflies. The young may have a knowledge of the truth, and

believe it, but not live it. Such possess a dead faith. Their hearts are not reached so as to affect their conduct and character in the sight of God, and they are no nearer doing His will than are unbelievers. Their hearts do not conform to the will of God; they are at enmity with Him. Those who are devoted to amusements, and who love the society of pleasure seekers, have an aversion to religious exercises. Will the Master say to these youth who profess His name, Well done, good and faithful servants, unless they are good and faithful?" 2T 235.3

"The young should cultivate a spirit of devotion and piety. They cannot glorify God unless they constantly aim to attain unto the fullness of the stature of Christ—perfection in Christ Jesus. Let the Christian graces be and abound in you. Give to your Saviour your best and holiest affections. Render entire obedience to His will. He will accept nothing short of this. Be not moved from your steadfastness by the jeers and scoffs of those whose minds are given to vanity. Follow your Saviour through evil as well as good report; count it all joy, and a sacred honour, to bear the cross of Christ. Jesus loves you. He died for you." 2T 237.1  
Jesus Christ is the perfect example and model for young people. He, the King of kings, took off His heavenly

crown and lived a perfect life on earth, accepting humiliation. He knew the worries and temptations of youth, but He resisted the wicked one. He worked selflessly and gave His youth in the service of fallen mankind with love and responsibility. Will you follow His example? Dedicate your youth to the service of Jesus, He is waiting for you.

Amen.





## *Caring For The Pastor's Flock - His Children*

**Pr. Idel Suarez Moleiro**  
USA

“And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” (Hebrews 2.13).

My daughters, who are a fourth generation ministerial family in the Reform Movement, told me that as children they thought all families traveled frequently and met many other people and cultures. They did not realize their peculiar, blessed, and privileged lifestyle as a ministerial family. Like many other children of preachers, they were blessed with a Christian education, health, intelligence, traveling opportunities, a nuclear family, and godly parents. It was not until they became older that they realized that others do not have such

blessed surroundings. Many have to face the lot of growing up in a divided household, do not have the opportunity to go to a church school, never go beyond a few miles from the place of their birth, and have to suffer under the burden of disease.

### **The Benefits of PKs**

In the United States, the children of pastors are called *PKs* meaning “preacher's kids.” And it is amazing to see how many great leaders, inventors, and movers and shakers of society have been the children of ministers. See Table 1 which presents a short list of prominent children of ordained ministers. Why were many



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children of pastors prominent in history? It is because God bestows His blessing on those who serve others and sharing the message of truth benefits the giver more than the receiver.

There are wonderful promises to those who serve as ministerial families. God promises to bring

give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I [am] the LORD that healeth thee.” (Exodus 15.26). And if disease does strike a family member, it is God's and a character enrichment blessing for the entire family to seek

**Table 1.0. A short list of prominent children of ordained ministers.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Fame</b>	<b>Father's Profession</b>
Wilbur and Orville Wright	Inventors of the airplane	Bishop of the United Brethren in Christ
Woodrow Wilson, Ph.D.	President of the United State of America and President of Princeton University	Presbyterian Pastor
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	Leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States	Baptist Church Pastor
Margaret Thatcher	Prime Minister of the United Kingdom	Methodist Ordained Minister
Angela Merkel	Chancellor of Germany	Lutheran Pastor
Harriet Beecher Stowe	Author of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	Presbyterian Ordained Minister
John and Charles Wesley	Founders of the Methodist Church and authors	Anglican Pastor

blessing and show mercy up to a thousand generations. “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he [is] God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” (Deuteronomy 7.9).

God has also promised to bring health and prevent disease to those who keep His commandments and minister His word. “And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt

for a better heavenly country.

Research has shown unequivocally that growing up in a nuclear family—with biological godly parents—which embrace service, reduces their children's risk of suicide, incarceration, and poverty. It further increases their ability to excel in school, foster mental health, and even to develop greater physical well-being.

After analyzing the data from the National Health Interview Surveys with over 82,000 participants, the results suggested that children



growing up in a “traditional, natural marriage—featuring formally enacted, irrevocable, exclusive man/woman sexual union preceded by chastity—[was] essential for children's development and well-being.”

“Review of an extensive body of diverse research finds that, compared to children continuously living with two parents, married parents, or their own biological parents, children in other family arrangements consistently experience lower emotional well-being, physical health, and academic achievement... This evidence strongly supports the claim that maximum child development occurs only in the persistent care of both of the child's own biological parents.”

D. Paul Sullins, “The Case of Mom and Dad,” *Linacre Q.* 2021 May; 88(2): 184–201. Accessed on November 18, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8033487/>

The benefits from a ministerial nuclear family even positively impact the church family, the neighborhood, and the community at large. They provide a safer and a peaceful atmosphere for society.

The positive effects of stable marriage and stable nuclear families also spill over. Neighborhoods, towns, and cities are more likely to

flourish when they are sustained by lots of married households. The work of the Harvard sociologist Robert Sampson tells us that neighborhoods with many two-parent families are much safer. In his own words: “Family structure is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, predictor[s] of variations in urban violence across cities in the United States.” W. Bradford Wilcox and Hal Byrd, “The Nuclear Family is Still Indispensable,” *The Atlantic*, February 21, 2021. Accessed on November 18, 2022. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/nuclear-family-still-indispensable/606841/>

### **The Paradox**

Yet why is it that some children who grow up in a nuclear pastoral family choose to abandon their faith, spiritual heritage, and become infidels? Why do some pastors and their wives retain their children in the faith and others do not?

In the American Union, when tallying up the 13 pastoral families with 54 children, the analysis suggests that 56% of the pastor's children remained in the church, whereas 44% did not attend church nor followed a reform lifestyle. How is it in other unions and fields?

This paradox of growing up in a religious family and rebelling against

it is sometimes referred to in the literature as “the Preacher's Kid Syndrome.” It refers to children of ordained ministers, or of preachers from a religious order, who rebel against religion and reject their family values.

Like the parable of Jesus, the woman lost her coin right in her home. Sometimes ministers lose their children in the mire and dirt of this sinful earth. Then like the woman, they must make a renewed effort to find their lost “coin” (child) and cleaning it (him/her) to reveal the image of God. Every coin bears the image and inscription of someone. Likewise, every human being bears God's image and inscription.

My good friend, Norbert Gutknecht, once told me, “It is not easy growing up as the son of the General Conference President.” My own daughters have shared with me that “others in the church expect them to be perfect, because they are the children of a minister.” So, there are unique pressures for pastoral children, especially when their parents hold leadership positions in the church, in spite of growing up in a Christian nuclear family.

The Rabbis say there are two main reasons why Jewish children leave the faith. They first give up the Kosher diet laws, and next marry gentiles. I do believe that keeping the dietary laws are so important in

helping our children develop sound minds in a sound body.

Hence, the diet and friends play a competing role in the spiritual development of the preacher's children. Family is a determining factor, but the influences of a worldly diet and ungodly boyfriends and girlfriends sometimes undo all the good taught at church.

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Additionally, in my 50 years in the faith, I have observed that the greatest reasons children leave are because the influence of worldly school education, unsound social media (internet platforms of wicked music, evil movies, pornography), and ungodly courtships. The apostle Paul clearly weighed in on the influence of evil communications from non-Christian school education, ungodly friends, listening to popular songs, and seeing movies portraying fornication, sensuality, and foul language:

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good



manners.” (1 Corinthians 15.33). So what can we do to avoid the loss of ministerial children and encourage them to continue to follow in the steps of their parents serving the Lord? Here is a review of some principles to consider besides the ones already alluded to above. Below are five spiritual recommendations for caring for the home flock—the minister’s children.

### **1. Love Your Wives—the Mother of Your Children**

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and advised him that all preachers and fathers were to provide for their families—spiritually, financially, emotionally, and socially. If the pastor as husband and father is to lead out in the church, he must first be successful at home.

“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Timothy 5.8).

“(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3.5).

Pastor Larry Watts teaches that the best gift fathers can give their children is to love their wives. He says that children learn respect from their mothers and love from their fathers.

Have you not heard the cliché: “Happy wife—Happy life.” If mother is not happy at home, nobody is happy. Husbands and fathers need to lead by love and discipline (Hebrews 12.6). But it starts with loving the wife of their youth (Malachi 2.5): loving her every day and gaining her love every day. Falling in love many times but always with the same woman—the wife. Husbands need to take time to listen to them. They need to continue with the early dating attentions. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not give the silent treatment. Remember to give her the gifts she likes. Remember to take time to be with her and your family. Talk with her. Dream together. Work together. Vacation together.

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” (Ephesians 5.28).

“Husbands, love [your] wives, and be not bitter against them.” (Colossians 3.19).

Love is giving. It is giving time, money, and gifts. Love is caring and listening. Love is communicating with courtesy and gentleness.

The pastor is to care for his own home flock. He is to provide for them not just financially but emotionally—with his wife and children. He is to model the family of

heaven on earth through the grace of our Almighty God and the workings of His Spirit. As he wins souls for Jesus, he is not to neglect winning the souls at home.

*The spiritual as well as the mental*  
**and physical powers suffer  
under the influence of  
unhealthful food.**

“He who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in his family life. It is as essential that as a father he should improve the talents God has given him for the purpose of making the home a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, he should make use of his God-given powers to win souls for the church.” Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry*, 88-89.

**2. Eat Healthy Meals Together**

In the book of Isaiah, it was foretold that diet influences conscience. What we eat determines the choices we make when tempted to go astray. Self-control is developed with the rules of diet reform. Those who do not teach their children to be temperate in eating, dressing, and viewing, will fail in developing

Christian character. Parents must teach the truth of health reform and lead by example.

“Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.” (Isaiah 7.15).

So much depends on our consciences. Life is made up of choices. As my father-in-law said, “Decisions determine destiny.” Ministerial homes need to be the example in health reform. It starts in the home by teaching the principles of diet reform. Good wholesome natural food should be served at our tables. Unhealthy food should have no place on the table-altar before the Lord.

“The spiritual as well as the mental and physical powers suffer under the influence of unhealthful food. The conscience becomes stupefied, and the susceptibility to good impressions is impaired.” Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, 379.4.

Malachi taught that the family of Levi had a special covenant with the Lord. They were never to consider the table of their homes as contemptible. Malachi addressed the priestly families not just of his day but of our day. His words reach our ministerial families admonishing us not to think that diet has no bearing the development of their children's happiness in this world and the world to come.



“A son honoureth [his] father, and a servant his master: if then I [be] a father, where [is] mine honour? and if I [be] a master, where [is] my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD [is] contemptible.” (Malachi 1.6, 7).

What we eat is the offering we present to the living temple of the Lord which is our body (1 Corinthians 3.16). It is not a meaningless social and physical activity.

Yet eating wholesome foods is not enough. It is important to eat together. Studies show that when a family eats together, they stay together. And if they eat whole foods, they will pass on a heritage of self-control and holiness to their offspring. When they eat together, they are able to bond together and resolve conflicts which their children and youth are facing.

“Studies have shown that the children of families who eat together:

- Eat more healthful foods
- Are less likely to be overweight
- Do better in school
- Are less likely to engage in

risky behaviors Research has consistently found that the more often kids eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.”

“Family meals help to strengthen families because it is a time for talking and sharing. They encourage a sense of belonging. Family meals help improve family communication... Studies show that mealtime conversation around the dinner table helps increase a child's vocabulary, and this leads to better readers. Better readers do better in all school subjects.” Marilou Rochford, and Sherri Cirignano, “Eating Together—Eating Well. Making it a Priority,” *Cooperative Extension* Fact Sheet FS1104. Accessed on November 18, 2022. <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1104/>

### 3. Speak Well and Not Evil of Others

The Africans have a proverb which says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” A village cannot make up for the parental responsibilities of the parents, but it will affect the children's development. Pastoral children resent hearing church members who accuse or gossip of about their parents. Some get to the point of harboring ill feelings toward the church as a whole.

Sister Ellen G. White had a twin

sister. Her name was Elizabeth. They were both part of a Christian nuclear family in Portland, Maine. Listen to Sister White's recollection:

“My parents, Robert and Eunice Harmon, were for many years residents of this State [of Maine]. In early life they became earnest and devoted members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In that church they held prominent connection, and labored for the conversion of sinners, and to build up the cause of God, for a period of forty years. During this time they had the joy of seeing their children, eight in number, all converted and gathered into the fold of Christ.” Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 12.

They all happily accepted the First Angel's Message proclaimed by the gospel minister William Miller. But they were summoned before their Methodist congregation for their new joy, were tried and disfellowshipped against their wishes. Elizabeth became so embittered on witnessing the ill treatment of her parents that she never returned to church. She never accepted the Adventist message. She became doubtful of all organized religion.

Therefore, since communication is so important in a person's mental and emotional development, the

Psalmist gives us good advice:

“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and

*Family meals help to*  
**strengthen families  
because it is a time  
for talking and sharing.**

pursue it.” (Psalms 34.13, 14).

When tempted to speak evil of a fellow believer or a minister, say something nice about them. The apostle Paul writes that it is not enough to avoid evil speaking of others. Rather that evil trait must be substituted with kindness and a forgiving spirit.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4.31-32).

Therefore, it is necessary to avoid all gossip about pastors and their wives, and to deal courteously with ministerial families. Likewise, parents need to avoid speaking evil of any church member in the





presence of their children.

Pastor Henry Dering who grew up with devout Christian parents once told me, "I never heard my parents talk bad of anyone in the church." His father was a church elder, and young Henry eventually became Vice President of the General Conference and served multiple terms as President of the American Union.

#### **4. Get the Youth Involved at their Local Church and Church Schools**

Jeremiah suggests that the youth need to get involved in their congregations and bear some burdens.

"[It is] good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." (Lamentations 3.27)

I have observed that in this new era of internet technology, young people surpass their older parents in surfing, searching, recording, and editing programs. Why not assign youth to get involved in operating the church's internet platforms? Why not let them become assistants in recording and editing the Sabbath sermons? Why not have them organize special youth programs to reach out to other youth.

Another area of interest among the youth is music. Young people generally love to listen to music and perform. Let them form a choir and an orchestra. Assist them in

presenting a special song program for the public as an evangelistic effort. Encourage them to prepare specials for the Sabbath services. Let them collectively praise the Lord as the epistle of Paul to the Colossians recommends.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5.19).

Ideally, everywhere there are at least 6 children, pastors should move heaven and earth to open a church school. This will provide multiple opportunities for the pastor's children to get involved in church activities not just on Sabbath but during the week.

"In some countries parents are compelled by law to send their children to school. In these countries, in localities where there is a church, schools should be established, if there are no more than six children to attend. Work as if you were working for your life to save the children from being drowned in the polluting, corrupting influences of the world." Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, 307-308.

Think for a moment what the great Reformer, Martin Luther, said 500 years ago. Then, imagine what Luther say if ministers sent their children to public schools today knowing all the degradation to

which young minds are exposed in a godless environment?

"I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of the youth.

### **5. Go to Conferences**

Take your family to every conference you possibly can. Let them make friends in the church.

I noticed that Pastor Pablo Rodriguez had all his children in the faith. During one of my visits to Mexico, I asked him, "What is your secret for maintaining all your children in the gospel?" His reply was, "I always take them to conferences." Do you do that?

Do not miss the regional and union conferences. Do not miss out on taking your children to meet other believers and talk with all youth of like-minded faith. My daughters enjoy meeting other children of ministers, sharing experiences unique to preacher's kids, and praising the Lord together. It is a

*Youth Conferences and Field*  
**Conferences bestow  
great blessing on all  
who attend including the  
children of ministers.**

blessed moment to share time and space with others of the faith and ministry.

It is not enough to come to Sabbath School and attend the Second Service. Youth Conferences and Field Conferences bestow great blessing on all who attend including the children of ministers.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10.25).

Sister White recounts how much she enjoyed attending conferences as a Methodist child. She was touched by the sermons. She tells how other mothers cared for her spiritual well-being. She was converted at a conference. We really all need to do our part in encouraging others' children to seek the Lord including the children of pastors.

"The following summer my parents went to the Methodist camp meeting at Buxton, Maine, taking me with them. I was fully resolved to seek the Lord in earnest there, and obtain, if possible, the pardon of my sins. There was a great longing in my heart for the Christian's hope and the peace that comes of believing."

"One of the mothers in Israel came to me and said, 'Dear child, have you found Jesus?' I was about to answer,



'Yes,' when she exclaimed, 'Indeed you have; His peace is with you, I see it in your face!'" Ellen G. White, *Christian Experiences and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, 17-19.

By taking your children and youth to conferences, they too may have the experience of Ellen Harmon. They too may make peace with God, with themselves, and with their fellow beings.

Above all, pray for and with the family. My dear shepherd, pastor, minister, priest, husband, and father, care for your lambs and sheep at home. And let the church pray and help the minister to save his home flock, namely his children. May the words of Scripture become a reality in the day of Jesus Christ: "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Thank you and amen.



7

May 27th  
SABBATH



## *As For Me and My House We Will Serve the Lord*

Pr. Adalicio Fontes

Portugal

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”  
*(Joshua 24:15, KJV).*

The last words of many people in the final moments of their lives can be very meaningful. Many things can be revealed at that moment. This usually gives people the freedom to say what is really in their hearts. In some countries, these last words, known as *last will*, can even be considered in court.

What makes us relate this fact to

what Joshua said in chapter twenty-four? In that chapter, we are able to read the *last words* he said prior to his death at the age of one hundred and ten (according to Joshua 24:29), and they are: “...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”  
*(Joshua 24:15, KJV).*

God raised up Moses in Egypt as the deliverer of His people and performed great miracles through him. He was the *great leader of the liberation* of His people and Joshua, as his successor, was the *leader of the wars*. To reach the Promised Land, they still had to face great challenges, and Joshua was the man chosen by God to carry out His plan; with intelligence and

strategy, he led the people from victory to victory, in the lands on the other side of the Jordan. Joshua learned to trust completely in God and had beautiful experiences with heaven.

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem. "And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God." (*Joshua 24:1, KJV*).

By saying "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,*" what did Joshua imply? Let us analyze the context for this question in verses 14 and 15: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (*Joshua 24:14-15, KJV*).

In these verses, Joshua makes a statement: *the most* important thing for him and his family is God. He

states clearly and without any doubt who he will serve, the one and only God. He did not care what the other Israelites and their families said, he was determined and knew what was right for his household.

He spoke to Israel and advised them, and even warned them, to put away the foreign gods that some still served and to serve the Lord with all their hearts.

He then said that an individual decision had to be made: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (*Joshua 24:15, KJV*).

At this point, Joshua was ending his mission of leading the people to the Promised Land, and that was the right time to renew the covenant with the true God. Joshua led these people to choose whom they wanted to serve, and he as leader had already made his choice: "*...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" Upon this testimony, the people declared: "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." (*Joshua 24:24, KJV*).

"'As for me and my house,' said

Joshua, 'we will serve Jehovah.' The same holy zeal that inspired the leader's heart was communicated to the people. His appeals called forth the unhesitating response, 'God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah, to serve other gods.'"

*Within the family unit there*  
**should be no room for  
selfish individualism [...]  
Joshua was a leader  
committed to the  
family unit**

(Patriarchs and Prophet, page 523.2).

Joshua and his family received gladly this news, but what is the meaning of this to me and to you? What truths do we see in this story that apply to us today as individuals and families?

### **1. A family devoted to the Lord**

What can we learn from the statement, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*"? It teaches us that it is possible to serve God through our family relationships and to subject our family projects to the heavenly will; likewise, we learn that it is possible to serve Him with sincerity and faithfulness, therefore, our family relationships should be

based on the truth of God as revealed in His Word.

### **2. True leadership begins at home**

*"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* What does it reveal to us? That the leadership of a true leader begins within his own house. For Joshua to be the leader of all the Israelite people, he must first be the leader of his own family. Many leaders are busy leading crowds but forget to lead their own home. Many want to change the world but are far from trying to initiate change in their own home.

If God does not build our house, any wind will blow it down. Have you been setting aside time to seek God through daily prayer with your family?

"For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5, KJV). If we do not look after our house, how can we be good stewards of God's work?

Work hard and take care of the good that God has given you, *your family*. Many marriages have failed and are separating because they can no longer find the time to care for and nurture this precious asset.

When there is no commitment, as per the oath at the altar, to take care of the marriage and family, then



don't expect a bright and happy future. Every day people get divorced over small things and disagreements. Let there be no anger between the spouses. *Family* is an invaluable asset that needs attention and care; if we do not give it this attention, the enemy will gladly do so.

### 3. Committed to the family unity

*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* also teaches us that within the family unit there should be no room for selfish individualism. Little is known about Joshua's family, but we do know that he was a leader committed to the family unity; he was not someone solicitous with himself only but with all those who depended on him. So Joshua didn't just say, “I will serve the Lord,” he said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” It is not enough to be a leader; you must, above all, be the leader of your own house.

### 4. An example for those inside and outside the home

*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* instructs us that the person who serves God should be an example to those around him. It was not a part of Joshua's character or personality to say, “Do what I say, but not what I do.”

Were Joshua's words: “*My house will serve the Lord*”? No. His actual words were, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” Joshua put himself first to be an example to those under his authority. How many examples we have of people who want their family members to serve God, but they themselves do not lead by example!

Joshua was not forcing his family members to serve God; in fact, true service to the Lord is not based on obligation. Indeed, the inspired pen states: “The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force” (The Desire of Ages, pages 435, 436).

“The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, 'with healing in His wings.' Malachi 4:2.” (The Desire of Ages, page 22.1). The Lord's servants express a voluntary

devotion based on gratitude for His love and grace.

As a priest and leader in your home, how committed are you to the teaching and practice of God's law in your home? Within your home, the priority should be the instruction and counsel of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6). Joshua's example broke the boundaries of his home and led the people to also declare, "Therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God." (Joshua 24:18, KJV). What a wonderful thing!

#### **5. A house grounded in God's truth**

*"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* Who guides us? We should not be guided by majority opinion. What was Joshua's environment like? He was surrounded by idolatry and paganism, but within his home, the Most High was truly worshiped and honored. Although all the families of Israel chose idolatry, Joshua had no doubt that he and his family would serve the Lord.

Many times, faith in Christ puts us against the current; on many occasions the service and worship of God leads us to confront the popular opinion. In those moments, we must cling to the Lord with faithfulness and sincerity. Then divine grace will give us the necessary certainty to

declare above the voice of the people: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"*

#### **6. Continuous blessing**

When Joshua declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!", what did he recognize? That God's blessing in our lives is conditional. What is the real secret of continuous blessing? Obedience. Many of the people of Israel were enjoying the blessings that flowed from other people's obedience and not from their own, because many

*Don't let your marriage end*  
**for lack of God's presence.**  
**Don't give up on your**  
**family, say with Joshua:**  
**"As for me and my house,**  
**we will serve the lord."**

still had idols, even after the promise to serve God. Let us consider what Joshua said to them: "Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel." (Joshua 24:23, KJV)

Even as a nation, these people were still being blessed, but there were individuals who harbored strange gods. As Joshua declared, if there



was no repentance and forsaking of sins, the blessing would cease. “If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.” (*Joshua 24:20, KJV*)

To enjoy the blessing of God, obedience is necessary; this is a divine rule. There can be no blessings in our lives and in our homes if there is no obedience.

### **“As for me and my house” – A final question**

If we are considering this decision, it is appropriate to ask, “whom will you serve?” The truth is that this is a choice we make not just one day, but every day. Things will always get in the way of you choosing to do so. These things will try to replace the first place that God should have in your heart.

The Bible says, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (*1 Peter 5:7, KJV*). Are you going

through a difficult time? Leave everything at the feet of Jesus, trust in Him and He will do the rest. “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” (*Philippians 4:6, KJV*).

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” (*Psalms 127:1, KJV*). A family without God is susceptible to failure, regardless of social class. If God is not in control of our home and our life, all will be in vain.

Don't let your marriage end for lack of God's presence. Don't give up on your family, fight for it! Say what Joshua said: “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*”

Jesus is our great friend and is always willing to help us serve Him as the only one in our life and in our family. Amen.



AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE  
WE WILL SERVE THE

LORD

Readings for the Family Month  
May 1 2023

General Conference International Missionary Society Seventh-day Adventist  
Church Reform Movement

