

The Journal



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Attitude

I woke up early today, excited over all I get to do
before the clock strikes midnight.

I have responsibilities to fulfill today. I am important.
My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy
or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money
or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely
and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health
or I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can lament over all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up
or I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns
or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends
or I can excitedly embark upon a quest to discover new relationships.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work
or I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today I can complain because I have to go to school
or eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework
or I can feel honored because God has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped.
And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping.

What today will be like is up to me.
I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

Have a great day . . . unless you have other plans.

—Unknown

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Editor's Musings

Stepping out of the hotel lobby, the bitter cold wind of December caught my breath. I snuggled down in my coat and breathed a thankful sigh that I had the good sense to bring my heavy boots and scarf to London. Waiting for my friend Judy and my husband Jim to get into the car, I paused—and saw her. She was bent over in a curve with a thin scarf clutched around her shoulders. Her feet were wrapped in thin plastic bags tied on with string. One of the city's homeless. She had to be nearly frozen. My whole body ached at the sight. She passed by so quickly I had to run to catch up with her. Overtaking her so I didn't scare her by touching her on the back, I said "Ma'am, please—this is for you" as I stretched out my hand with several pound coins originally meant for the taxi.

Without hesitation she lifted the large bag in her hand and with strength I couldn't imagine from a woman of her size, bashed it into my face. It must have contained a brick because it nearly knocked me out. My face was instantly numb with pain. Uttering words of obscenity, she kept moving, never missing a step, as I reeled to keep standing. Jim and Judy, sitting in the taxi were beginning to wonder if I had vanished into thin air. "What happened to your face?" they asked in horror as I stumbled into the car.

As clergy wives, most times the vicious attacks we receive by those we try to help do not come in physical form. They are verbal, emotional, and inflict hidden wounds. But they do leave scars. Mother Teresa once said "The biggest disease today is not leprosy or cancer. It is the feeling of being uncared for, unwanted, of being deserted and alone." Maybe that is why so much of our world is hurting and wants to hurt someone back.

Yes, I still press coins into the hands of the homeless. And yes, I still hear lectures from my husband about it! But the point is that we should continue doing whatever the Lord impresses us for good. Even if we are knocked down! Even if we are hurt! Even if it is by our own church members!

God bless each of you!



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The Mountains or the Maker

Sandra B. Pearson

Thoughts on Psalm 121

Sandra has been the wife of a pastor for many years. Currently she works with her husband, Walter, for the Breath of Life television ministry.



Do I look to the mountains, expecting my help to come from them? No, my help comes from the Lord who made the mountains. He will not let you slip or fall but is always there to hold your hand. He never slumbers or sleeps but watches over His people day and night. The Lord is your keeper; He shades you from the blazing sun. The sun will not hurt you and the moon will not harm you. The Lord will help you so you will not fall into evil. He will preserve your soul. He will watch over your comings and goings as long as you live.

—Psalm 121, *The Clear Word*

These poetic sentiments have affirmed thousands at the summit of contentment and sustained many others in the valley of despair. They have become so synonymous with affirmation that tears of joy and smiles of contentment appear practically at the moment the recitation begins. It's one of those psalms that always seems appropriate, no matter what the situation. And yet, there seems to be another layer of meaning lurking beneath the serene surface of this psalm. In the opinion of some commentators, the Psalmist is suggesting that we often

look to mountains for help when it is the Maker of the mountains who actually deserves our trust.

Do we trust in creatures sometimes, in human beings, in wealth, in things, when He is by our sides? Do we trust in the powers of this Earth when His providence, power and goodness are so readily available? We must lift our eyes above the hills to see the strength of One who "ever lives to make intercession for us?"

There are resources and individuals who represent mountains in our lives. Consciously or subconsciously, we come to depend on them. Without realizing it, we learn to depend on them to help maintain our stability from day to day. But the Lord is the only One upon whom we can rely unconditionally.

When I reflect on thirty-three years of fulfillment as the spouse of a pastor, a mother, a homemaker, and a professional; I realize that it is His unchanging hand that has helped me to juggle these roles with some measure of success. Jesus steadfastly led me and helped to make sense of it all. He was the invisible, irreplaceable entity standing within the shadows to keep watch over me and my family through the years.

It is a blessing to be surrounded by mountains. I have been blessed to have many in my life. Until a few years ago, my parents were mountains for me. Their thoughtful instruction during my childhood was priceless, but not more meaningful than the encouragement that they supplied for me as I faced the challenges of adulthood. They became best friends to me and my husband. We visited them, vacationed with them and drew strength from them on a regular basis. They were dedicated Christians whose wise counsel and mutual devotion represented a virtual fortress. My husband's parents accepted me as their own and, though they often took my part over their son, blessed us both in much the same way. Family was for us a mountain range.

In a real sense, my spouse has been a mountain for me and I believe that he would say that I've been the same for him. My adult children and I fondly recall those lectures that he repeated whenever we arrived at a new church. He would remind the congregation that he was the only member of our family who was paid to weather their criticisms and suffer patiently through their tirades. He warned that, if anyone attacked me or our children, they had better pray that the Holy Spirit got hold of him before he got hold of the attacker. Otherwise, he said, smiling broadly, there could be trouble.

Church members seem to think that pastoral families have no other reality outside of the congregation with its continuous concerns, but in this instance, God used us to uphold each other. My husband and I took the time to discuss what was happening in our individual professional situations with a view to solving problems. We gave each other the benefit of our corporate knowledge, but those discussions eventually gave way to more pleasant

thoughts. The natural humor that you observe as my husband preaches has been a blessing in our relationship and in our home. We laughed our way out of many difficulties as we trusted in God as the center of our joy. My spouse has been a mountain in my life.



There are times when the spouse of a pastor feels alone. . . . In order to support our pastoral spouses and the Lord's work, we often cover broken hearts with smiles. . . . There is no mystery surrounding the fact that pastoral spouses are singled out as targets of the enemy's attacks. The influence of the spouse on the pastor's effectiveness is greater than most imagine.



Early in my experience as the spouse of a pastor, I was blessed to have a few superlative role models. There were more experienced spouses who, by precept and example, enriched my information base. Their nurture and advice enveloped me at a critical period of my development

as the spouse of a minister. They were mountains.

Through the years, God has strategically placed peers in my pathway who empathized and understood. Trust developed between us and we were able to share the unique joys and sorrows that are possibly known fully only by those who have elected to take this path. Because distance or some other barrier often forced me to walk without the support of a fellow shepherdess, I learned to treasure those relationships and depended upon them to comfort me in times of need. Other pastoral spouses were mountains for me.

But most of us know that loneliness often accompanies the pastor and the pastor's spouse. We are blessed when we can be there for each other, however, the job of a pastor will sometimes leave the spouse to manage some loosely related task while the pastor is engaged in a series of obligatory tasks. In other words, there are times when the spouse of a pastor feels alone. Sometimes we even feel forsaken. Both my husband and I have realized that the pastor has avenues through which to verbalize the frustration that comes in the wake of the loneliness or frustration, but the spouse must often deal with these feelings silently. In order to support our pastoral spouses and the Lord's work, we often cover broken hearts with smiles. Whom do you depend on then?

There is no mystery surrounding the fact that pastoral spouses are singled out as targets of the enemy's attacks. The influence of the spouse on the pastor's effectiveness is greater than most imagine. In the book titled *Pastoral Ministry*, on page 86, the Messenger to the Remnant Church says this: "The wife of a minister of the gospel can be either a most successful helper and a great

blessing to her husband or a hindrance to him in his work. It depends very much on the wife whether a minister will rise from day to day in his sphere of usefulness, or whether he will sink to the ordinary level."

At first, this seems to apply only to the relative professional success of the pastor, but the influence of the pastoral spouse is so pivotal that it cannot be ignored by Satan. His attacks on the pastoral spouse have the potential to generate results that are potentially just as devastating as direct attacks on the pastor. Each of us must recognize both our importance with regards to the effectiveness of our spouses and the significance of our own spiritual strength in the larger scheme of things. When we are strong, our spouses tend to be affirmed and encouraged. If we allow ourselves to be overcome by the trials that confront us, the effectiveness of our spouses may be diminished. The matter is one of great consequence. Do we act as though pastoral spouses never have personal challenges or do we own our vulnerability and decide to whom we must turn for strength? David stands to declare that we cannot depend on mountains. The hills to which we have looked for assistance will disappoint us eventually. At perhaps the very moment when we face our most formidable foe, we will look and find no assistance.

Mountains are sometimes there for others. Mountains sometimes rise to represent problems instead of solutions, but Jesus is always there to defend. He is a very present help in the time of need. The same power that spoke the world into existence, that launched the heavenly bodies on their invisible paths through the sky, and gave life to all things, is ever present to intervene for us. But we must look above the mountains.

There may be pastoral spouses

who have never encountered adversity, but I have never met them. There are those who seem to think that "Mount Pretense" is a reliable mountain in which to trust. At length, however, wounds and frustrations must be dealt with or they will turn into resentments. Jesus stands above the mountains with healing for every malady.

There are those who cherish the belief that the organization to which we fondly refer as "the church" will somehow attend to the needs of every worker and supply the



*The same Jesus whose
power and authority
steady the "ship of
Zion" is careful to hold
pastoral families in the
palm of His hand.*



personal resources required to sustain each pastoral family over the span of a professional career in ministry. While I thank the Lord for this church and its inspired organizational system, I beg you to look even above this mountain. The same Jesus whose power and authority steady the "ship of Zion" through the raging waters is careful to hold pastoral families in the palm of His hand. I can testify to the faithfulness of God. He has always been there to see me and my family through. Whether I was serving the church as a volunteer Bible

Counselor, volunteer personal counselor, or juggling the responsibilities of parenting, home-making, and a professional career, I was never alone. I just had to look above the mountains to see His smiling face.

I enthusiastically declare that I wouldn't trade the experience of being married to a pastor for anything. It has allowed me to see for myself how the triumphant power of Jesus overcomes the significant power of evil. But that is not to say that being a pastor's spouse is an easy job. There are times when it can seem the most thankless, endless, lonely job in the church. Your deficiencies seem impossible to hide while your contributions seem impossible to recognize.

My strength comes from the knowledge that we are preserved by a "Keeper" who neither slumbers nor sleeps. He is a watchful keeper who doesn't have the least inclination to sleep on the job.

He not only protects, He also refreshes us like cooling shade in the heat of the day. He is never far away. He is as close to us as our own shadow. He is at our right hand, and since the right hand is thought to be the working hand, He assures us that He gives us strength to accomplish tasks that seem never to end. He will not suffer us to lose our footing in times of distress. Though adversity and criticism may try to overthrow us, He dispels our fears by keeping our feet from being moved.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. Whether that evil attacks from within or without, He is there. He has promised to preserve us in our going out and our coming in; in other words our moves. Having moved in and out of fifteen different dwellings, I take particular comfort in the fact that Jesus protects in this way. Think about it when your next move comes!



The Husband-Wife Relationship

D. M. Bhebe

The word "relationship" is defined as a connection, an affinity, likeness or attraction between persons. A husband and wife must have a good relationship to sustain a satisfying marriage. There must be a strong connection between the two.

After Creation, God said, "It is not good for a man to be alone." Consequently, He created Eve.

When young people are dating and they make the decision to marry, certain things happen. They give themselves unreservedly to one another. They look at marriage as the culmination and climax of their courtship experience. They feel liberated from the courtship restrictions and they look forward to possessing each other in a complete sense. These progressive developments in a loving relationship lead to a deeper and more meaningful relationship. Each partner is thoughtful of the other and the words "I love you" are said often.

Once married, the husband and wife should exercise self-control and avoid senseless quarrels. When two are united, they are blending two distinct personalities. It is important to nurture one another and not let one become dominant over the other. Communication is important and all couples must work to avoid misunderstandings that cause strife in a marriage.

Once the honeymoon is over, real life enters the picture. Job responsibilities, children and the everyday tasks that accompany life take time and energy. It is easy to neglect one another and be critical. It is important for each spouse to accept the common mistakes that happen when the other is overwhelmed with responsibilities. They must remember their love and look to God for guidance.

There once was a college student named Rosemary. She was training to become a literature teacher. While in school, she met a wonderful man who had many qualities Rosemary admired. John and Rosemary decided to get married and Rosemary envisioned a romantic life with the man she loved.

After awhile, married life didn't meet Rosemary's expectations. She found herself bored doing the household duties. She retreated into the world of fiction and spent her days reading romance novels.

Rosemary realized the reading of such fiction was not doing her any good. She was comparing her life to that of the unreal stories she was reading. She could not help but notice the contrast between her life and the lives of the novels' heroines. Rosemary was so dissatisfied with her marriage she began questioning her choice of a mate. She began to dwell on her dissatisfaction and

D. M. Bhebe and her husband live in western Zimbabwe, Africa where he is a pastor. They enjoy doing the Lord's work. They have three sons. D. M. is self-employed as a tax consultant.



began thinking of her life before marriage. She began to view her husband as stupid and dreary.

When Jesus was on this earth, He gave us clear advice on dealing with our fellow man. In Matthew 7:3-5, He says, "Why then do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? How will you say to your brother, 'Please let me take that speck out of your eye' when all the time there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Rosemary failed to heed Jesus' advice. She became convinced she was superior to John. She imagined she was the victim of misfortune to be married to a man who was beneath her in accomplishments and possibilities. She actually began to grieve over the sacrifice she had made in renouncing her chances for a career. She began to bemoan her fate and she dreaded the drudgery of housework.

Rosemary began to think of herself as a martyr. She longed for release from her bondage. Unfortunately, Rosemary is not alone in her despair. All too often, people let the devil weave himself into their lives and they start questioning the importance of their marriage vows.

Fortunately, for Rosemary, she decided to seek the advice of her pastor concerning her unhappiness and dissatisfaction. The pastor pointed out that an individual is capable of making or destroying his or her own happiness. Happiness comes as a result of unselfishness. Happiness occurs when one focuses attention on wholesome and desirable things rather than on things which are unpleasant and disappointing. The pastor stressed that happiness is a state of mind. Rosemary finally

realized she was unhappy because she chose to be.

The vows which a man and woman take at the time they pledge their absolute fidelity to one another represent the most solemn and binding obligation possible. The parties agree to accept each other for better or for worse as long as life lasts.

Rosemary discovered that with her willingness to face reality and assume her role as wife and help-mate, she found contentment. She

came to realize that her marriage was not a prison. It actually became a haven. Rosemary looked to God and sought counsel from His teachings. Consequently, her marriage became strong and her outlook on life positive.

Such is the case when a man and woman work to maintain their relationship. God has blessed the union of man and woman and it is up to us to cherish and uphold that union. 



Greatness Is Up to You!

Robin Y. Jait

There is just one you, not twenty, not ten, not two.
In all of the whole world through, God only made one you!

How special are you, how great is your fame?
How loved your appearance?
How revered your name?
When others are frowning, can you keep your smile?
When others have quit, do you still walk that mile?

Greatness is something that takes time to achieve.
And when it is given, how will you receive?
Do not take it with arrogance. Do not take it with pride.
But receive it with trust and love will abide.

In your heart, from His heart, to other hearts too,
Giving is the thing trust helps to do.
How important your greatness is, is all up to you.

There is just one you, not twenty, not two.
In all of the whole world through, God made only one you.

Robin and her family are currently residing in Berrien Springs, Michigan. She and her husband are ministering in the Michigan City and East Chicago Indiana churches. Robin is co-founder of "Yours is a Ministry Too," an organization geared towards encouraging and helping pastors' wives stay closely connected to Christ. It also encourages them to use their talents and God-given gifts to help others. Robin loves singing for the Lord and sewing.



Marriage Lessons From an Ivy Plant

Judith Schwarz

Judy counts among her greatest gifts her husband, children and birth family. She started her career teaching in church schools, but has changed careers in the last few years. She thoroughly enjoys being a case manager for individuals who are mentally and physically challenged. Rare spare time is filled with reading and sewing. Her passion in life is growing in her relationship and understanding of God, and sharing this with others.

This article was originally a letter accompanying a wedding gift for a friend of Judy's daughter.



Twenty-four years ago, I was given a plant as a bridal shower gift. It was given to me by a friend in the church where I was teaching. She told me that it was a Swedish Ivy, and that it symbolized friendship. I was happy to get the gift, but quite sure that it would not last, as I have the proverbial brown thumb. A gardener I am *not*!

Never did I dream that such a simple gift would take up so much of my time and thought through the years to come. Never did I dream that in twenty-four years I would still have this plant—well, kind of.

You see, there are some characteristics of this plant that are very unique. First, I have seldom seen another one in flower shops or green houses. Second, it is quite fragile, it can die easily—because it seems to respond to its environment more than other plants. Third, in some ways it is very tenacious. In spite of being fragile, it also revives very easily.

My husband, Steve, was in the seminary when we married, and we still had 18 months before he was finished. The plant grew quite well during that time.

Eventually, we had to move to our first church together—all the way across the country to California. In the disruption of routine in finals and packing and preparation for

graduation, the plant got ignored. After shipping our things off, I realized, somewhat to my dismay that I still needed to figure out what to do with the ivy, and what a bedraggled plant it had become! I think I would have abandoned it at that time, but Steve thought we should keep it. After all, it *was* a present.

I trimmed the long bare vines off, watered the plant and tried to find a safe place in our little car to carry it. As we drove across the hot August country-side the poor plant died more and more each day. We stopped off at Steve's parents place on the way for a few days. I cut back all but the barest growth. Since Steve was still reluctant to give up, we repotted the poor plant in fresh soil, in a styrofoam cup. We bought one of those cup holders, hung it on my car door, put the little plant in it, and headed off to California. How carefully we tended the plant! If we stopped for longer than just gas, we found shade, and left the windows down.

Our first assignment was pastor's meetings at the conference summer camp. We took the plant into the cabin with us and continued our watchful care. On the last morning of the meetings, we were finally ready to go see where we would start our "real" work. We were so excited!

We loaded the car again, putting the little plant back in its holder. After just a week, it was perking up and looked almost respectable—it even had two or three new leaves.

In our excitement, we forgot the plant was in the car and locked it up safe while we attended the final meeting. The car was sitting in the bright California August sunshine. When we got back to the car, it was to find a very sad-looking plant. It looked like it had been cooked clear through. Since there was no trash can handy, we carried it with us! Steve still did not want to give up on the plant. In the excitement of house hunting, unpacking and settling into our first “real” home, the plant was placed in the kitchen window, and ignored. Several weeks later, I noticed the plant again! To my total surprise, the last twig in the dirt had survived, and the ivy had once again turned into a thriving little plant.

Every move we have made, the plant has accompanied us. It’s been thriving, half dead, repotted and back to thriving again at least once every two or three years. It has donated parts of itself to lots of friends and co-workers. It has lived through just about every kind of plant neglect you can imagine. Every time, given good fresh soil, a little tender care, and lots of water (by the way, it is a water hungry plant, and can grow roots and thrive quite a while in just water), it has taken off and thrived again.

After our last move, once again in a styrofoam cup of water, the plant’s home is in a nice south facing sunny window. It has taken on a whole new character. It has grown very thickly with new leaves, and the sun has made the leaves reddish in color. (Little sun makes them a tender green.)

Now, I can’t help but draw some comparisons between that plant and marriage. And after 24 years of being

married and raising kids, I guess I am entitled to a little preaching, so bear with me!

Love is like my plant. It can take a lot!

Hot and angry words, sarcasm, blaming: create a harsh environment that will kill your marriage. Just like the hot environment inside the car almost killed the plant. Gentle, kind words, thoughtfulness, forgiveness and going way past halfway, combine to make an atmosphere that will grow a strong marriage.

The right exposure of sun to the ivy gave it interesting new leaf colors. The right exposure to the *Son* helps your marriage grow and gives it lots of new dimensions and interests.

Love for one another, starts off strong in a marriage. But a time will come when marriage will resemble my plant in its wilted, shriveling up leaves, and bedraggled look. (That’s a sure sign that the plant needs to be repotted.) That’s when you will need to spend some time with each other. Remember why you got married in the first place, adjust your priorities to fit life as it is currently, ask God for help, read about how to make your marriage better, and keep going.

Tenacity, like the plant’s (and Steve’s), is important in marriage. There are going to be days when you will be so frustrated with each other, that you will want to give up. Don’t let that happen. Decide now that giving up is not an option. Look at the plant. Remind yourself to keep communicating. Keep forgiving. Keep asking Jesus to take control, and ride things out until your marriage is even stronger than before.

Water, which is so important for the plant, is like prayer in a marriage. It keeps the Holy Spirit there. The more you pray, together and separately, the healthier your marriage will be.

Even the very symbolism of the plant (friendship ivy) applies to marriage. Become each other’s best friends. Stresses, kids, in-laws, job pressures, money problems, all are more easily handled when you have your best friend with you. That is even more true when the best Friend, Jesus is there.

So while you are enjoying and building your marriage, think of the lessons from my plant, and grow yourselves a wonderful, God-blessed marriage. 



*Who can find a wife of noble character?
She is worth more than the costliest jewels.
Her husband has total confidence in her.
He will never be poor.
All her life she will do him good
and will never do anything to harm him.*

—Proverbs 31:10-12, The Clear Word

Showing God's Love to Hurting Children

Karen Dockrey

You feel so bad for them. Your nephew faces a learning disability and you wonder if he'll succeed at school. The child you've liked since she was a pre-schooler has just been diagnosed with cancer at age eight. Another divorce is breaking the heart of your daughter's best friend. Your own child is reeling from a former friend's announcement that he's no longer cool enough to sit with the friends he's known since kindergarten.

You feel so bad. You'd do anything to take away their pain.

But feeling bad won't take away their pain. And trying to erase the pain with words like, "Everything will be okay," makes a child feel invisible.

So what's the answer? Walk with the child through her pain. Then equip her to manage the tough stuff she faces. It won't be easy, but it's a whole lot easier than abandoning a child to suffer alone.

Start by recognizing that the world of childhood is far from trouble-free. Learning disabilities, cancer, divorce, death, and damaged friendships haunt the happy days we want our children to have. We'd like to wish these away. We'd like to pretend they don't happen. But the tough stuff is reality. It's part of this imperfect world we live in (Romans 8:19-21; Revelation 21:1-4). So face it down

together. As you accompany your children through the pain, you become the vehicle through whom God shows His love. Children feel less lonely when they have a hand to hold. They feel God's very real hugs and very needed attention.

Continue by equipping your children to manage their crises. There are ways around every tough circumstance. So find those ways with God's help. Invite teachers and fellow parents to show you strategies that overcome your nephew's learning disability. Ask nurses for distractions during painful cancer treatments so your friend can get back to the fun of life. Teach relationship skills so kids can get along with new siblings in their blended families. List ten positive ways to respond to the cruel friends who insist on ugly words rather than encouraging ones.

In any tough experience assure children that their feelings make sense. Anger, confusion, and feeling betrayed are fitting responses to the tough stuff of this world. Give outlets for these powerful feelings so kids can face their tough stuff rather than be eaten alive.

As you hear children tell you their stories, it's okay to say, "I understand." You can't say, "I know how you feel," unless you've been through exactly the same experience. But you

Karen Dockrey is a youth minister and writer who likes to study the Bible with kids. She's convinced that God has the answers to our questions, and that we can make it through the tough stuff. She's the author of over twenty-five books including Growing a Family Where People Really Like Each Other and The Holman Student Bible Dictionary.

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can listen closely enough to hear how that child feels about this experience this time.

Even when you haven't been through these things yourself, you can understand the feelings. You know what being sad, mad, worried, or confused feels like. Let your understanding of the feelings, combined with a willingness to listen to specific circumstances, provide the care your friend needs.

Finally, just enjoy the children. Kids going through tough stuff are kids first. Help with the tough stuff, but don't stay there. Ask about things other than the learning disability, the cancer, the blended family, and the friendship squabble. Share the good stuff of life as well as the bad. And stick with each other through thick and thin, confident that life is worth living no matter the obstacles.

When you feel bad about a tough time a child is going through, let your sadness prompt you to loving action. No matter how personally painful it may be for you, willingly walk with your child through the pain. Refuse to abandon her to suffer or cope alone. Add your strength to his. Do the practical things that make a real difference. Whether you're a child, parent, teacher, church workers, or another adult who cares about children, there is always something you can do to help. Start with the following M.I.N.I.S.T.R.Y. actions. By putting feet on your care, you'll help all types of tough stuff.

M.I.N.I.S.T.R.Y.

Make certain you hear. Rather than assume you know what your friend is thinking and feeling, invite your friend to tell you. Be the yearned-for-friend or parent who wants to hear the details. Questions that show your interest include:

- Will you tell me about it?
- What's school like this year?

- What do you think about what's happening to you?
- What makes you so mad?
- What makes you happy and sad these days?
- How would you change things if you could?
- What actions have you tried to help with that problem?

Incarnate the Word. Rather than just quote Scripture, live it. As you give homework help, deliver kid-friendly meals, do laundry, teach friendship skills, and keep hearing the details, you show the Romans 8:28 good that God continues to give even during crises. As you go along



with your friend to cancer treatments or therapy sessions, you show the Romans 8:37-39 truth that God never abandons us. As you accept every feeling including uncomfortable anger and scary questions, you show the Ephesians 4:25-27 truth that emotions point us to actions God wants us to take.

Notes are more great ways to contact between visits. Sometimes visits are too intense during the height of the tough stuff. So leave answering-machine messages, backdoor gifts, cookie bouquets, letters, coloring books, floss for friendship bracelets, and more. You don't have to be there in person to

express God's love, but doing nothing makes a family feel abandoned.

I can care no matter how much it hurts. Too many people avoid children who are going through tough stuff because it hurts them. They can't figure out why innocent children have to go through such agonizing stuff. But when we refuse to express care, children suffer alone. You can help kids face down the tough stuff because God will equip you (Philippians 4:13, 19) and because He Himself will one day wipe away all our tears (Revelation 21:4).

Show others how. Ephesians 4 reminds us that we are equippers to prepare God's people for works of service. Caring during tough stuff is one of these services. So mobilize a caring team in your church, made up of both kids and adults. Show them how to listen, befriend, walk together with simple words like, "This is Terry. Will you show him the ropes and let him sit by you during class?" or "Let's each wrap a gift for Jenny. Then she can open one each time she has a chemo treatment." Help your team accept tears as signs of love (John 11:35, 36). Prompt them to be strong by sharing the pain rather than pushing it away (Romans 12:15). Show them how to give the practical help kids need, such as some privacy, some company, help with homework, invitations to events, lack of labels, and more (Matthew 25:21-46).

Teach kids about it. Children are often cruel when they don't understand. When a nurse came to explain Emily's cancer fight, her fourth-grade classmates said things like, "Why will her hair fall out?" and "My cat had leukemia and it died." The nurse was able to explain that the hair falls out because chemo goes after fast-growing cells and hair is one of the fastest growing. She also

explained that, though cats die of leukemia, kids usually survive. This group of children then took up for Emily when a child in another class, who did not know about Emily's cancer, made fun of her hat. They educated children. They demonstrated that as children understand they show care. Invite the parents, teachers, medical professionals, and others to tell you what they want you to know and what they'd like you to do. Be a good gossip by spreading the word.

Remember. Mark on your calendar the day of the learning challenge, the date of cancer diagnosis, the remarriage date, the friendship pain, the birth, death, and more. Then give care in the form of a card, a call, a personal touch: "I'm praying with you as the proficiency tests approach." For continuing crises, repeat the care in two weeks, two months, one year, and annually after that. "I remember that your baby sister died this month, and I want you to know that she and you matter to me."

You really love the child rather than feel sorry for him or her. Kids going through tough stuff don't want to be set apart, admired, or treated with kid gloves. They want to be loved. So cuddle, listen to, and enjoy them. See them as the delightful individuals they are, and equip them to give as well as receive.

Important: Hurting kids are not heroes; they feel lonely and isolated. Refuse to isolate them more by putting them on a spiritual pedestal or admiring them from the pulpit. This urges church members to feel different from them and hesitate to approach them with normal friendship. Instead, teach your church members to live Romans 12:15 and John 11:35, 36 with concrete expressions of care, by hurting along with them, and by giving practical help.



My Testimony

Alice Bernard

Alice Bernard has worked as a nurse most of her life, and recently became a certified Child Development teacher. She coordinates a prayer group that prays every Friday night at 9 p.m. through a calling partners system. Alice and her husband, Elder B. P. Bernard, have two daughters and one son. They have been blessed with eight grandchildren.



I have always been enthusiastic about sharing my faith and telling the experience of my conversion. Although I was born into a Christian family, I did not choose to accept the Lord as my personal Savior and Friend until I was 14 years of age. I vividly remember hearing the voice of Jesus as if He were next to me saying, "I gave my life for you so that you may be free from sin and have access to eternal life."

Having read Matthew's account of the children sitting on Jesus' lap while He blessed them, I imagined myself sitting on His lap while He spoke to me of His love, His compassion, and His desire for me to give Him my heart.

My parents were fervent in their religion, and they wanted my three brothers, my two sisters and me to follow in their footsteps. They worked hard to raise us children to be good Christians and good citizens. Yet my heart was troubled. As I began to study the Bible more intensely, I discovered God's promises and found that my life was moving in a different direction than that which my parents had intended.

One evening, while lying in bed reflecting on God's love and His plans for me, I had a dream which forever changed my life. In that dream, I saw myself crossing a large river, leaving the world behind. On

the other side of the river I could see the outline of a beautiful city, comparable to the one described in Revelation 21. It seemed as though I swam all night, but with the help of heavenly angels, not only I but also members of my family and many other people were led toward the shore of that bright and inviting city.

A few weeks later, my older sister and I sealed our commitment with God through baptism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In our opinion, it was the only church whose beliefs completely followed the Bible teachings. As a newly baptized adolescent, I was eager to share my faith not only with my friends, but even more with other family members. My sister and I encouraged our brothers to attend church services with us. We were saddened, however, when our father forbade us to talk at home about our new-found faith. To him, an educated architect, Seventh-day Adventists were a small group of fanatics among whom he would not want his children to be found.

My sister and I often sneaked out of our home to attend church services, and we quietly shared our faith with our brothers and sisters. One by one, they were also baptized. When our father discovered what had happened, he announced that no one in his home should ever step into a Seventh-day Adventist Church again. Little did he know what God's plans were. That same year, our mother joined the church. For some time, our father had been treating us badly, but now he decided that he no longer wanted to be a part of our family. So he left home. This was one of the most difficult times of our lives. Physically we struggled to get by on Mother's dressmaking income. Emotionally I wrestled with the knowledge that we had lost our father because of our faith. I prayed constantly for direction, and I asked

the Lord to change our father's heart. The church joined our family in prayer, and they provided the support we needed during those difficult months.

Our heavenly Father did answer our prayers. Although Daddy still did not embrace our faith, he did return home. He became more tolerant of our beliefs, and even sat through some of our worship moments. God's promises continued to provide direction to our lives.

As we children reached adulthood, we became more involved in our church and we dedicated our lives to sharing God's love with others. My two sisters and I married young men whose lives were also dedicated to spreading God's message of love. These three Seventh-day Adventist pastors have collectively given 50 years of service to the ministry, preaching throughout the West Indies and the United States and leading thousands to Christ. Today,

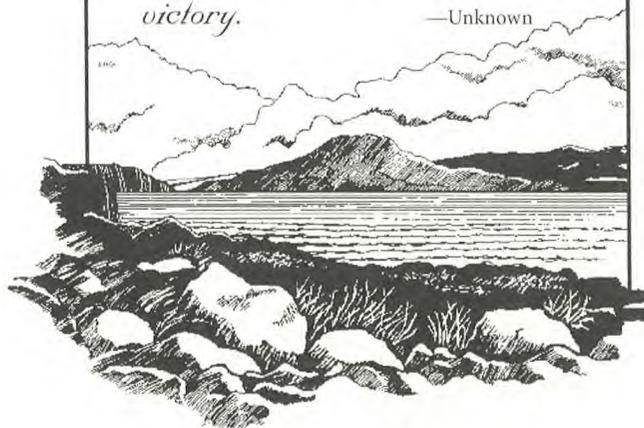
more than 200 of our family members are in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Six of our children and six other family members have become pastors, and many others have become church workers.

Even with all of this, one of our most joyful moments occurred when my husband had the privilege of baptizing my father, who had at last chosen to follow the Lord a few years before his death at the age of 87. Praise be to God!

The outlines of that beautiful distant city I saw in my dream long ago seem ever more visible as I feel the soon coming of our Lord and Savior. As I wait with eager anticipation for His return in glory, I remain constantly mindful of His mercies and His love. It is thus with intense joy that I exclaim as did the Psalmist, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1). 

*Every worthwhile
accomplishment,
big or little, has its stages of
drudgery and triumph; a
beginning, a struggle, and a
victory.*

—Unknown



My "Soul's" Desire

Hazel Marie
Gordon

It only happened once or twice a year, just according to how fast my little feet grew, but I can tell you that one of my most vivid and treasured memories was of dear Mother Charity and I going into the big city of Kalamazoo to shop for new shoes. Now the little Shirley Temple dresses so in vogue at that time were darling as well as the silky lace trimmed slippers, but it was the black patent Sabbath shoes for church that I was most excited about. My sweet mother needed all the patience she could muster as we trekked from one shoe store to another looking for just the perfect pair of Sabbath shoes. On more than one occasion I can still hear Mother expressing sympathy for "that poor young man that had worked so hard" only to be informed by Miss Priss (yours truly) that she would think about it, adding "perhaps I'll be back later." With obvious empathy Mother would thank the helpful young clerk profusely as she turned to leave, giving a final glance at the stack of the black patent leather rejects.

Through the ensuing years I have had all kinds of shoes, all the way from tennis to heels, some trimmed with bows, others with buckles, ones that tied, or laced up, as well as shoes in a myriad of colors. As I think back, perhaps part of my fascination for shoes stems from my earliest experience and deprivation.

Memories of the many times there were no shoes to warm our little feet, even in the coldest, snowy winter days when I, along with my younger sister and baby brother, lived in a drafty tar-paper shack before our adoption.

Shoes, by the way, are mentioned in the Bible 31 times. One of the most powerful and meaningful of all the references to shoes is found in Ephesians 6:15. In the previous verses it is giving a description of what we need to wear in the last days of this old earth. It talks about how we need to be wearing an armor, something that will shield us from the darts of the evil one, and that's where the shoes come in. I particularly like the paraphrase by Jack Blanco in verse 15 found in *The Clear Word* where it says, "Put on the shoes of the good news of Christ's peace." As we live day by day in a world that has anything but peace, I long for that time, as well as treasure, this precious promise that through Christ I can have real peace. As we all know, this ultimate peace will only happen when we get to heaven. And so my friends, whether I will be wearing sandals, boots, or those golden slippers that the beautiful old spiritual talks about, or even a pair of shiny black patent leather shoes, I can't wait to walk those streets of gold. By God's grace let's all plan to be there. 

Hazel is the wife of Malcolm Gordon, president of the Southern Union. She is also Southern Union's women's ministries advisor and Shepherdess coordinator.





Frauke Gyuroke

Insights from a Marathon

It was a warm and sunny Sunday morning in May. My husband had just left to take our son to the local pathfinder group and I was doing work in the kitchen while listening to the news on the radio. Toward the end of the news announcement, the speaker announced that on this Sunday, the 17th the International Vienna City Marathon was taking place in Vienna, Austria, and it would be broadcast through one of the Austrian TV channels. Now, I have to admit that I am not a very sporty person nor am I normally interested in sports programs on the television. But on this particular day, I thought I might as well watch the event.

While quite a few Austrians were probably still asleep and others comfortably sitting around their breakfast tables, thousands of people from all over the world got ready to run more than 42 kilometers through Vienna. When I watched the multitudes at the starting point, I got not only interested, but excited. As I had planned some work to do on this Sunday morning, it was not possible for me to watch the entire marathon. But I went back and forth between my work and the TV set, skipping part of the marathon but still seeing enough of it to quench my

excitement. While watching, some insights were given to me.

A few of these insights may come easily to your mind when you think of watching a marathon. The Apostle Paul compares our way to heaven with a marathon. In 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, he writes, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." In the Vienna City Marathon, three runners were leading the pack. One was from the eastern Europe country Hungary, the other two from Kenya. Quite early in the race, they left most of the other runners far behind. I went to do some task and when I came back to watch more of the race, something had happened to the Hungarian. He had vanished. The two Kenyans had taken the lead and the Hungarian was not mentioned anymore. I imagine he felt extremely frustrated to be left behind and become insignificant to the race.

In the meantime, my husband and our son had returned from the pathfinder program. They, along with our daughter, joined me in watching the marathon. Our attention was focused on the two runners from Kenya. Simon Bor was the favorite. The other, Willy Cheruiyot, was supposed to be the

Frauke is the wife of Thomas Gyuroka, a pastor in Bregenz, Austria. They have two children, Simon and Lisa. Frauke loves to translate, read, write and enjoys being involved in church work. She also enjoys being outdoors.



pace maker. I learned it is much easier to run in such a long race if you are not on your own. It helps to have someone run at your side and hold the tempo.

I resolved to make my fellow church members my God-given "pace-makers." If there are times when having someone at our sides in our earthly race may bother us, we should remember that it is for our own good to have people near us. They drive us on and help us to keep the pace instead of falling behind.

As I watched the runners, there was one thing that touched me very much. After a U-turn in the route of the marathon, the runners ran back the way they had come. The way was separated into two lanes so the runners would not collide. As the two groups came closer together, something amazing happened. The "slower" runners who were already exhausted took the energy to applaud the two Kenyans as they passed them. There was no envy because they were so far ahead of the rest, no anger that they were out of reach, no accusations of any kind. Rather, there was a wonderful spirit of comradeship. There was pride in the fact that Bor and Cheruiyot had made it so far and it seemed to give hope to the other runners that they, too, could finish the race. The commentators mentioned that this was one of the nicest traditions ever.

I thought this was an important lesson for me and my church. If we compare our way to heaven with a race, we can think of people who are leading, people who are pace makers and people who are falling behind. Now think of how we treat each other. Do the spiritual leaders get pointed at because of their "extreme" views? Or, are the ones not in leadership positions looked down on? Just think of how much more attractive our churches would be if

we would genuinely appreciate one another and cheer each other on in our race to heaven. We should support one another, regardless of where we are in the race. We should remember that it is God's grace that has enabled us to get where we are in the race and it is God's grace alone that will help us finish the race.

In the end, it was not Simon Bor, the favorite, who won the race. It was his pace maker, Willy Cheruiyot. He even set a new record and ran the race in a time that got him a nice Mercedes in addition to the prize money. I later read in the newspaper



God does not care if we come in first or last . . .

He just wants us to finish the race. Then we are winners. . . . When we cross that finish line, think of the enthusiastic response we will get from God.



that only after he had passed the winning post did he learn about the car. It made me think of the many "extra-surprises" that may await us in heaven. Of course, Jesus is the supreme prize.

Cheruiyot passed the finish line just seconds before his fellow country man but even our children noticed the difference in how the two were received. The winner got all the attention imaginable: flashbulbs popped, reporters asked questions, water bottles were offered. And, of course, he won all the prizes.

Compared to the attention the winner got, the second place runner received almost no attention at all.

But what about the masses who, from the very beginning, had no chance to win? What about those who knew they would not even be among the first ten or even hundred, who knew that no one would recognize their painful preparation, their efforts, their sacrifices? Why did they start anyway? After all, a marathon is not a nice and easy Sunday afternoon walk. It can be physically hazardous. Listening to someone who took part in more than one marathon can give a most unpleasant picture of the strain and pain most of the runners endure. Why do the participants do it? Is it to prove something to themselves? Is it the personal triumph they feel when they pass the finish line?

All of the runners do have something in common. They all participate and finish the race. And isn't that what really counts, regardless of whether it is a physical race or a spiritual one? Running a race with the focus on winning and giving all that one is capable of is expected. God does not care if we come in first or last . . . He just wants us to finish the race. Then we are winners.

If we give our all as we run our spiritual race, think of the encouragement we give to others around us. When we cross that finish line, think of the enthusiastic response we will get from God. He will embrace every saint who reaches heaven and treat him as the winner, no matter how long it took him to get to the finish line.

I want to run that race. I don't want to get sidetracked by anything. I want to keep my eyes on the goal so I can see Jesus standing at the finish line waiting for me. I want to run straight into His arms and rejoice in a race well run. 

Let Us Rise Up and Build

Hepzibah G. Kore

Hepzibah G. Kore is the Shepherdess Coordinator for the Southern Asia Division. Before she took up these responsibilities, she served in education for 25 years. She has been happily married to a minister for 28 years. They have one daughter, one son, one son-in law, and one grandson. Hepzibah enjoys listening to music, reading and writing articles.



We have entered a new millennium. Time is flying at lightening speed. We know the second coming of Jesus is at hand. Some have predicted that Jesus will come during this year. Some say He will not come so soon because the Gospel has not even reached our neighborhood, let alone all nations. More and more new congregations are established. But how strong are the existing churches? Do believers come through one open door and leave through another? What are our responsibilities as Shepherdesses of the remnant church? What should we do to build and strengthen our churches? The more I thought about it, the more Nehemiah's life came to mind.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes. Even though he lived a comfortable life in the palace, he was mindful of the remnant of the captivity. On enquiry, he found that they were in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the gates were burnt with fire. What he did to rebuild the wall teaches us valuable lessons on how to rebuild the churches that are broken down both spiritually and physically. The manner in which he accomplished the task

gives us guidance on how to bring a struggling church together.

Concern for Others

Nehemiah enquired about the welfare of his people. When he heard of the pathetic conditions in which they were living, he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed to God. In prayer, he confessed his sins and the sins of his forefathers and claimed God's promises of restoration if the people returned to God.

What is the condition of your church today? Are the fundamental doctrines, the very foundation of the church broken down or upheld and followed? The walls of a city are built for protection. Similarly, the doctrines are to protect the church from falling into Satan's traps. We condemn and criticize the condition of today's church but live comfortably unmindful of the moral decline in some areas. As Shepherdesses and responsible women in God's vineyard, don't you think it is time for us to weep over the condition of the church, confessing our sins and claiming God's promises of restoration? Because Nehemiah presented the problem before the Lord, he found favor in the sight of man-king Artaxerxes. Similarly,



when we present our concerns for the church before God, He will work out a solution for us.

Call to Build

On reaching Jerusalem, Nehemiah went alone to inspect the condition of the walls so he could act accordingly. He did not depend on a third person's information. He wanted to study the situation himself. He called the people only when he was sure of what needed to be done. He explained the condition they were in and said, "Let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." He assured the people of God's leading.

How do we react when our church becomes the object of reproach or mockery? Do we add more fuel to the fire or does the fire of the Holy Spirit kindle our hearts to do something? The people responded to Nehemiah positively and strengthened their hands for the good work only because he took the initiative to rebuild. Similarly, if you take the initiative and formulate good plans to build your church, the people will support you.

The Secret of Success

The enemies mocked at their endeavor. They tried their best to

stop the work. Surprisingly, in spite of all the hindrances, the work was completed in 52 days. The reasons are as follows. Firstly, Nehemiah set an example. He believed he was doing a great work for the Lord. He turned to God at all times for guidance, strength and courage to withstand the enemies and to complete the work. Nothing could persuade him to stop the work. Secondly, the people were united. They jointly supported their leader. Thirdly, they had the mind to work. Fourthly, each one was confined to one's task.

The believers of your church have physical, spiritual and social needs too. Stoop to the level of the common people, identifying yourself as one among them and do everything possible to meet their needs.

When the work was complete, the enemies felt God's presence so much they perceived the work was of God.

When you, as a woman, take up a leadership role in the church, you hear mockery, unkind and rude remarks. Your work often seems insignificant. There are more people to discourage than to encourage. But do not be discouraged. If you are

discouraged, who will stand by the believers? Be mindful of your responsibilities. Depend on God fully. Have a mind to work. He will fight your enemies for you. Victory will be yours. Remember that you are doing a great work. Do not let anything hinder your progress.

Meeting the Needs

After the wall was completed, Nehemiah made arrangements to meet the various needs—physical, spiritual and social—of the people. The believers of your church have these needs too. Stoop to the level of the common people, identifying yourself as one among them and do everything possible to meet their needs.

This requires complete dedication on your part. If you want your church to be built in the Lord, you have to surrender yourself totally to serve the church and the community. Live an exemplary life so that those who come in contact with you will see Christ.

The Challenge

Nehemiah had a challenge before him—the challenge to build the wall of Jerusalem. His plea was "God, strengthen my hands." You, too, have a challenge to meet, a challenge to build God's church. Your plea also should be "God, strengthen my hands." If your hands are weak, who will strengthen the believer's hands? They also will become weak. In spite of the difficulties you have to face, the hurdles you have to cross and the obstacles you have to overcome, if you only fix your eyes on the goal set before you, you will win the battle. People will know that you are empowered with the Holy Spirit. And the task will be accomplished sooner and much easier than you expect.

As we enter this next year, let us rise up and build our churches.

Pastor Friend, Lift Up Your Wife

J. Grant Swank, Jr.

Pastor friend, lift up your wife before the heavenly throne. Your wife frequently puts up with frustrations unique to her position in church life. For example, there are times when you are criticized as pastor; those barbs may be unfair. You may be led of the Lord to deal with such injustices in a forthcoming sermon. That in itself gives you a certain personal release from the tension build-up due to the injustice.

However, think of your wife's reaction toward those who unfairly criticize your ministry. You, after all, are her husband; she does not like the unreasonable criticism concerning your dedication. Yet she does not have a pulpit from which to deliver a sermon. She has only her kitchen sink! However, she does want to defend you, point out how you were not understood, how you were misinterpreted. How can she vent her frustrations? Probably in no practical way.

Therefore, lift up your wife in thanksgiving to God for her being such a sensitive helpmate. She ministers alongside you, but frequently having to be silent when she would like to speak freely, openly about crucial matters. Let her know that you, at least, understand.

Other times the children in your home are said to do something they did not do, or say something they did not say, or behave in a certain manner which was misjudged. Those children live in that "fish bowl" called "pastor's home" seven days a week. Too many eyes are on them; they grow up with this surveillance—no let-up.

At times you can lose yourself in your pastor's study or in visiting pastor friends or attending a civic event. You can lose yourself in a sport or hobby that is not directly related to the family. However, your wife is left to work out that situation in which your daughter and son were unfairly criticized. She is left with hearing them out in the living room after an upsetting school day. She is left with trying to put pieces together.

Therefore, lift up your wife for the Lord's new-day strength to be hers as a mother to your children. She probably spends more hours with them than you are able to. Therefore, she needs your intercession for her day-by-day wisdom to be increased. Let her know that you take note of her careful motherliness to your children.

Sometimes the pastor's wife has a difficult time making ends meet.

Grant Swank is pastor of the New Hope Church in Windham, ME. He is married to Priscilla and they have three children—Crystal, Jay, and Heidi. He, a chocoholic, enjoys his family. He also is into watercolor painting, walking and taking in all the Maine scenery he can get!



There is only so much she can do with that “stretched dollar.” Yet the children keep coming home with another five dollars needed for this, a ten dollar bill needed for that. Medical bills mount up. Unexpected expenses interfere. She cannot take from the grocery money forever!

Where can she come upon an extra dollar or two? Can she find a part-time job outside the home? Does she have enough hours and energy to see that through along with being a minister’s wife and overseeing the home? At times, it can be especially grating to have to live on the salary that a pastor makes. Yet she tries not to complain for she understands that the gospel work is going ahead because your family is dedicated to ministry.

Therefore, lift up your wife for heaven’s economic miracles to bless her efficient efforts. And be more vigilant yourself in not over spending. Work out that family budget together. Is there some way that the financial weight can be carried more evenly by both of you? Talk to her about it.

Sometimes the thought may come to your wife that she did not decide on this ministry call after all. You are the one who was called, not her. The devil can twist her mind sometimes so as to get her out-of-sorts, depressed. This can occur so subtly that she is not aware of what is happening. However, you note that a discouragement has settled upon her daily duties. She feels as if she is going to implode.

Your wife may look at other wives in the congregation who do not have the home phone ringing off the hook with church problems clamoring for attention. She thinks how fortunate those women are in that their husbands are home evenings, not out to one more church function.

And she may also ponder that the parishioners’ homes are not “fish bowls.” They have the privacy she yearns for but cannot have.

Therefore, lift up your wife in prayer to God for His joy to return to her heart, for fresh happiness to bless her activities each day. Then let her know how much you appreciate all that she does, how well that she does it, and how you could not see through the ministry without her dedication. You could also plan a get-away for the two of you—far from the phone.

Another frustration may be her loneliness. There are so many details that the minister’s wife must keep confidential. She cannot talk about these private specifics of other’s lives. But she is pained by them. She cries over them. She prays for these individuals.

However, who is there to pray for her? Who listens to her sufferings? Who cares about her loneliness or even detects she is in fact lonely? After all, she smiles. She prays. She laughs. She gives. She enjoys life. At least, that is what the church folk have concluded about your wife. That is because she is a giver and a server. She is going to try her best to live out the Christian hope and happiness—especially in front of the parishioners.

Nevertheless, she is also quite human, just as all the rest of us. And so she has that empty vacuum to deal with. There is that island on which she resides. She has no trustworthy confidant. There is no woman friend nearby with whom she can open up. Perhaps in another pastorate it was different; but where she is now, she is very much alone.

You in your busyness may not be sensitive to this. It is because she does not want to worry you and the children so she hides her loneliness even from you. After all, she has

always considered herself strong and able to confront life’s difficulties with a certain reserve. Therefore, she does not want to admit even to herself that she feels very much alone, undone, at wits’ end.

However, what could you do if she did open up to you, telling you that she is quite spent in the work? How would you react? Would you conclude that she is weak, over-reacting, just going through “a phase”? Or would you listen, understand and then try to fill in her vacuum with some varied agenda? There are plans that you have had in the back of your imagination that you were going to set in place for the two of you. Then why not activate them right now? Your wife may need all that—now.

Therefore, lift up your wife, not only in prayer, but also in love—practical love. Do something different. Go someplace different. Eat out for breakfast more often, after the children have gone off to school. Vary the evening schedule; get a baby-sitter more frequently for those little ones. Consolidate some church meetings so that they are not spread out over every week night.

These days are complicated. Church life is becoming increasingly more difficult with the complex attacks from a complex world. Therefore, special attention must be given *by you* to your consecrated wife. She really is trying her best. But she needs you to say that you note that, that you thank God for her, that you are going to help her deal with the unique life of a pastor’s wife.

Reassure her that she is not alone in all of this. You are not only her husband; you are indeed her best friend. Then see through best-friend sharing in its most daily, practical persistence.

Heaven will bless you for lifting up your wife—now. 

The Privilege of Service



Patricia Navarro de Marquez

When I think of the privileges I have as a pastor's wife, I am grateful to God for the opportunities He grants me to serve Him. Nevertheless, I also know that along with those privileges come serious responsibilities. The brethren always expect more from me. A smile, a word of encouragement, a cheerful greeting. I try not to disappoint them even though my nature is a shy one. I try to be kind to everyone and show no favoritism to any in the church. There are times when certain brethren offer to do or give me something. Though I may benefit from such gifts, I always refuse. I feel I would be abusing my position.

The verse found in Matthew 20:28 comes to mind: "For the Son of man didn't come to be served but to serve." I think it is a beautiful thing to be a leader, but we must learn to

be like Jesus in His ministry. He was always ready to serve. He dedicated His life entirely to serving humanity.

An experienced colleague and I were once talking and she told me she had a small business. She sold fruit. I asked where she got her fruit. She said she would frequently visit the brethren who had fruit farms and because she was the "pastor's wife," they would give her the fruit or sell it to her at a very low cost. Her story made an impact on me. I wondered if what she was doing was right.

I have noticed that in the Seventh-day Adventist colleges there is an abundance of pastors' wives in teaching positions. I have often wondered if many hold their positions because of their intellectual capabilities or because they are pastors' wives. Is their interest to serve because of their experience and capability or are they employed because of their husbands' positions?

As a young pastor's wife, I noticed some of my more mature colleagues in the ministry would often ask favors from the brethren for one thing or another. It seemed to me they were taking advantage of their

positions. Soon they discovered the ability God had given me for manual crafts, so it didn't take long for them to ask me to do some of their "work" while they rested from their "labors." I remember asking myself what they had done to deserve those favors? Did being pastors' wives allow them to take advantage of others?

Such an attitude contrasts with Jesus, who said, "But made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7, 8). As pastors' wives, we must take heed and be like Jesus. We should not take advantage of our positions and expect our brethren to bestow undeserved gifts on us. Instead, we should bestow our gifts unto them. We should share our time and talents with them. We should remember what our Lord said, "It is better to give than to receive."

Dear sisters, dear pastoral wives, I encourage you to imitate the example of the greatest of all servants, Jesus Christ, our King. Be a giver, not a taker.



Patricia Navarro de Marquez and her husband, Pastor Jonathan Marquez, are working in the San Andres, Isla, Colombia district. She has written articles for several Adventist magazines. Patricia is also a fashion designer.

A Cry of Despair



Birdie Poddar

With delight the girl, Pushba, exclaimed, "Mother, isn't it wonderful that I have completed high school? Now I need to go to college. I can hardly wait for the time when I will be holding a degree in my hand and I will earn enough to support you." The mother stared at her daughter with tears in her eyes and replied, "Yes, Daughter, I am so proud of you, but . . ." her words faltered.

"But what, Mother, but what?"

After a long pause, Mother finally responded. "Daughter, ever since your father died, you know we have been poor. The little money he left behind has been stretched to its limits. I know you have a government scholarship to cover your school fees, but what about food and medical expenses? Worst of all, Daughter, I am very sick. I did not tell you earlier for I was afraid of disturbing your concentration as you completed your exams. I am not able to work anymore, so there is no way we can buy food and medicine."

"Oh, Mother, what shall we do?"

There was silence again. Finally, Mother said, "You have to find work my child."

"But, Mother, how can I find work with only a high school certificate?"

"Perhaps you can find a job as a receptionist. Just go out and try. You must work, no matter how menial the job, if we are to survive."

That night, Pushpa lay awake in bed, staring at the ceiling. She wondered why her father had to die. She wondered why she had to be an only child. At first, she had felt fortunate to be the only child, but now she wished she had a brother to help her in this crisis. No brother, no father and only a sick mother. Pushpa decided to look for work the very next morning, yet she dreaded the dawn of that day.

After a simple breakfast, Pushpa was ready to begin her search for a job. Mother kissed and blessed her before she went out the door. As Pushpa left her house, she wondered where to go. She thought she would try one of the big hotels in hopes that some manager would take pity on her and hire her.

Putting on a brave front, she approached a huge hotel. Though her legs were trembling, she went to the desk where the manager sat. He looked surprised to see her.

She began, "Sir, I am looking for a job. Can you help me, sir? I need one badly because my mother is sick. I can be a receptionist. Please, sir, I will do my best." She paused and her eyes filled with tears as she waited for his reply.

"Oh yes, yes, I can help you," he said. He picked up the phone, muttered some words, then dropped the receiver down. In a short time, three girls came down the staircase.

Birdie Poddar and her husband, D.S. Poddar, are enjoying retirement in the beautiful surroundings of Maranatha Colony, Hosur, India. Birdie spent many years as a teacher and office worker.



They all seemed very happy. They were dressed with fine jewelry and lots of makeup. Upon seeing them, Pushpa relaxed. She was happy because the girls looked as if they wanted to help her.

The girls took her hand, talked pleasantly to her and led her upstairs to the top floor of the hotel. She was led to a room and told to go in. After she entered, the door slammed shut. Realizing she was alone, Pushpa tried to open the door only to realize it was locked from the outside. In despair, she cried, "Oh dear, how dreadful for them to lock me inside! Does it mean I am captive? I did not ask for this!"

Pushpa wailed and cried loudly. She kicked the door with all her might. No one seemed to hear her. She kicked until her feet were sore, she banged until her fists were swollen. Her eyes burned with despair, her body trembled with fear. Pushpa was in deep despair.

As evening approached, Pushpa heard the door being unlocked. The door opened and a young businessman appeared. It was his habit to come to that hotel, relax and get some rest from the pressures and demands of his prospering business. He was a bachelor and had no real home to go to. He mostly sought food and rest from hotels. When he registered at the hotel, he was assigned the room in which Pushpa was held captive.

Upon seeing him, Pushpa retreated to one corner of the room. With folded hands, she pleaded for mercy. "Please, sir, do not touch me."

The man came close to her and she prostrated at his feet, crying and pleading. He then gently lifted her up and said, "Do not fear. I will not touch you. Just tell me your problem."

Pushpa told him how she had come to the hotel to find a receptionist job. She told how the

man downstairs had promised her the job, then tricked her into coming to the room. She explained how she was locked into the room for hours. She then said, "Please, sir, help me get out of this room. My mother is sick and needs me. I have no father and no brother and I need to find a job to support my mother. She must be very worried because I am not home yet. Please, sir, help me."

The man comforted Pushpa and assured her he would help her. But first, he said she must wait a few moments. When he started to leave, she begged him to stay. Again, he assured her he would be back, then he walked out the door and locked her in again.

It seemed like ages before she heard the door being unlocked. The man reentered and beamed at Pushpa with a big smile. He said he had a plan. He told her he had been to the temple to pray for a way to release her. He told her the only way to get her out of the mess she was in was to marry him. Pushpa was surprised but she had a feeling of peace and security with this man. The man opened two packages. One was a *mongal suthra*, a gold chain that symbolized matrimony. Then he applied *sindhur*, a red powder,

between the parting of her hair, to indicate they were married. He then covered her hair with a shawl, took her hand and led her down the stairs of five floors to the restaurant below.

As the couple passed, the manager looked at them with angry eyes. In a loud clear voice, the man said to the people in the restaurant, "Attention, please. Today is my wedding day. I want you all to rejoice with me. I therefore order the restaurant to give you all the best food they have and I shall pay the bill!" The crowd shouted and cheered and clapped their hands.

The bridegroom looked at his bride and both sat down to enjoy a delicious meal. Afterward, the bridegroom paid the bill and the couple walked out to his car and left the hotel. Pushpa's mother was well-taken care of and she received love and care as long as she lived.

This is a true story. Unfortunately, there are many other young girls in similar circumstances. These girls end up in lives of servitude and despair. Dear Shepherdesses, the Lord is calling us to reach out and help these poor, unfortunate girls. They need deliverance from this kind of life. They need our love. They need our help. They need to learn about our Savior. 

*One does nothing
who tries to console
a despondent person with word.
A friend is one who aids with deeds
at a critical time
when deeds are called for.*

—Titus Maccius Plautus

- ☞ Are you tired of your usual menus?
- ☞ Do you need a new Sabbath dish?
- ☞ Are you looking for a dessert for the school open house?
- ☞ Does your family want something different for dinner?
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