

The Journal



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A Modern Parable About Prayer

A large ship was wrecked during a storm and only two men survived and swam to a desert island. The two survivors looked around them and realized they had no recourse except to pray to God. To find out whose prayer was more powerful, they agreed to divide the territory between them and stay on opposite sides of the island.

The first thing they prayed for was food. The next morning the first man saw a fruit-bearing tree on his side of the island and was able to eat fruit. The other man's piece of land was barren.

After a week the first man became lonely and decided to pray for a wife. The next day, a ship was wrecked, and the only survivor was a woman, who swam to his side of the island. On the other side of the island there was nothing.

Soon the first man prayed for a house, clothes and more food. The next day, by some miracle, all these things were provided for him and the woman. However, the second man received nothing.

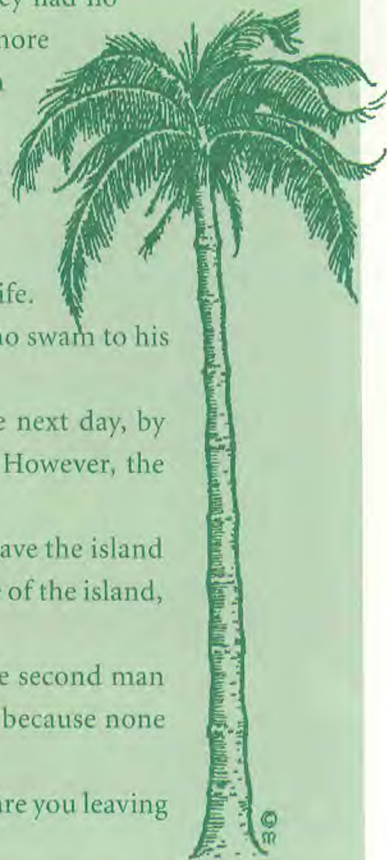
Finally the first man prayed for a ship so that he and his wife could leave the island and return to civilization. In the morning, a ship was anchored off his side of the island, and the crew were waving at him.

The first man and his wife boarded the ship and decided to leave the second man on the island. They considered him unworthy to receive God's blessings because none of his prayers had been answered.

As the ship began to leave, a voice boomed from heaven, saying, "Why are you leaving your companion on the island?"

"These blessings are mine alone," said the first man, "because I was the one who prayed for them. His prayers were not answered, but mine were, so he doesn't deserve anything."

"You are completely mistaken," said God. "He had only one prayer, which I answered. If it hadn't been for his prayer, you would have received none of the things that you did. He prayed that all your prayers would be answered."



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Editor's Musings

While waiting at a stop light recently, I spotted a bumper sticker which read, "The more you know, the less you need." It stuck in my mind as I continued running my errands. Each time I stopped to pick up something else on my list, that catchy bumper sticker phrase sprang up again in my consciousness. Kind of like a song that you can't get out of your head! Suddenly it dawned on me—did I really need all the stuff on my list?

It became clear to me that there was a good possibility that many of my hours could be wasted nurturing wants—not necessarily needs—on a variety of issues, and not just tangibles.

Looking around my home, I see lots of "earthly possessions" that are probably wants and not needs. The more I know about valuing my time and energy, the less I need a lot of stuff to take care of. The more I know my friends, the less I need the TV, video or computer stealing my time away from those I love and care about. And the more I know about my lovely Jesus and the value of Him guiding my life, the less I need to worry about tomorrow.

Sometimes we have scurried to accumulate things, rushed through significant events in the lives of our families, manipulated circumstances and designed our own futures. How sad. Maybe that bumper sticker was really a very short sermon delivered at a stoplight. It surely has changed *my* attitude about a lot of "things."



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Prayer Is Not Instant Pudding

Lois Hoadley Dick

One wintry day I decided to bake a custard pie. It turned out to be delectable, made of creamy milk and butter, farm-fresh eggs, topped with a browned, nutmeggy skim of butter dots. It took quite a bit of time to prepare but the family loved it. It was so much better than the instant pudding I sometimes make.

What made the difference? I checked the list of ingredients on a box of instant pudding. Except for the two cups of milk I was to supply, there was little nourishment in that little package. Its popularity stems from the fact that you get instant results. No waiting for an hour while the pie bakes.

We are so accustomed to instant results that we sometimes want instant answers when we pray. Not concerned too much with the quality, we focus on the action! We want the beauty without the beating, the flavor without the slow fire.

An evangelist told how he was on his knees praying for money to continue traveling. When he opened his eyes, he saw someone had slipped an envelope under his door. It contained a \$50 bill!

A man in the audience went home and tried the same thing. He knelt on his knees and prayed, but kept one eye on the crack under the door. Nothing happened, except he was

overcome with a feeling of defeat.

What are we to think? Is prayer only a casual request like asking someone to pass the salt? Or is prayer more like ask, see, and knock? In other words, use your mouth, use your eyes, your hands and feet, use everything, be a pest, but don't give up.

"Prayer," as Richard Trench has said, "is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His highest willingness." Byron Edwards put it this way, "God's delays are not always God's denials. True prayer always receives what it asks for—or something better."

What we call "slow" answers are sometimes blessings. The second question of Paul's converted life was, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" God did not answer that prayer instantly. He did not show Paul the jail houses, solitary confinement and public beatings he would soon endure. If God had shown Paul these things, perhaps Paul would have taken the road back to Jerusalem or contented himself with being a secret believer.

Of course, we are all familiar with "ordinary" prayers. One day I had to recopy two long manuscripts written several years ago. I couldn't even find the carbons. My files had been well organized, but my young son had rummaged through them, hunting

Lois Dick has written for over 30 years and began by selling a children's story. She enjoys biographies because she comes across so many untold stories of the pioneer missionaries who led hard lives for the Lord, but their faith moved mountains. Lois crochets while planning articles and enjoys following the weather and listening to classical music. She never stops reading; no electronic invention will ever replace a good book.

I believe God answered my prayers. However, there wasn't much nourishment in it. I had the taste of instant pudding, that was all.

for stories to read. Now nothing was in order.

I pulled out the long file drawer and stared at the mess. I knew finding the manuscript would take me at least two hours. I quickly prayed, "Lord, help me find them quickly." I randomly began looking for the manuscripts. The second manuscript I touched was one of the ones I needed.

It took about half an hour to retype it. Then I had to look for the second manuscript. I prayed, "Lord, I don't feel I should ask You again but . . ." The first manuscript I touched was the one I needed. How did I feel? I'm afraid to tell you. At first, I was elated. Then negative thoughts crept in. "That must have been a coincidence. God is really too busy to take time for such silly things. Lots of other people who aren't Christians have experiences like this." And so on.

But in the back of my mind, I believe God answered my prayers instantly. He saved me several precious hours at the end of a busy day. However, there wasn't much nourishment in it. I had the taste of instant pudding, that was all.

But note, we should be grateful for that instant pudding. We just need to make sure to adjust our appetites in preparation for something better. There is spiritual nourishment in slow, baked-to-perfection answers.



Make Of Every Moment a Life

Elizabeth de Pacheco

The best perfumes come in small bottles.

Great friendships are shown in small gestures.

A heart without intelligence is dangerous.

Intelligence without a heart is disaster.

Life without words is sad,

Words without life is a waste.

Music elevates and love is passionate.

Distance creates nostalgia.

Nostalgia is the absence of someone dear.

Bad people don't lose time, then

Why do we lose so much time fighting?

Fire burns, and love makes us do good.

Great events feed on previous ones.

If you find today how good it is to be important,

One day you will discover that it is more important to be good.

Elizabeth de Pacheco is a pastor's wife in Colombia, South America.



No one is irreplaceable, but all of us are useful and necessary.

How sad it would be not to have needy people who need love.

Where, how, when, and how much is not essential in fraternity,

Most important is always to love with respect and to be loyal.

I began to love life and she stopped being a mystery to me.

Do you want to make life better? Start at home,

better yourself through good communication.

The voice of a friend

Is the softest note in life's orchestra.

Who has cried much, has the clearest vision

To study the stars and the deepest eyes

To see everyday happenings.

Who has felt death closely,

Looks at life with different perspective.

Who escapes danger loves life more intensely

I discovered the potential of my inner self when I helped mankind.

The society objects have a price,

But man has dignity.

Love people as they are,

They will become what they should be.

Make Of Every Moment a Life. 🐱

Love as an Answer

Raquel Arrais

Raquel Queiroz da Costa Arrais was born in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte as a minister's daughter. She lived in various states in Brazil accompanying the ministry of her parents. While studying at Sao Paulo Adventist Academy and Brazil College, she met Pastor Jonas Arrais, whom she married in 1982. They have two sons, Tiago and Andre. Raquel studied education and worked as an educational supervisor. She obtained her Master's degree at Andrews University in the theological area, receiving her degree in pastoral ministry with emphasis in family counseling. From December 2001-2003, she worked as Associate Director of Shepherding and Women's Ministries in the South American Division. She is now Children's Ministries director for the South American Division. Her greatest dream is to see Jesus return and receive Him together with her family.



How do you feel when someone says, "I love you!"? Words like these are inspiring. They have the power of bringing out the best inside of us, perhaps even encouraging us to go in a new direction, plan new goals, new dreams and they can also change the direction of our life.

The feeling of loving and being loved is fantastic. This emotion relieves tensions and provides us one of the greatest experiences in the human relationship. God created us to love. He placed in us an enormous potential of love with the purpose of teaching us not only to speak of love, but to live love in all of its fullness.

Since I began my work here in the Division, I have faced new realities in relation to family, changes that take some time for us to get used to. One of these changes is the fact of having to live with the constant distance between myself and my husband and my children. It is said that love is tested by distance; I have to agree with whoever made this statement, although it is not easy to put this into practice.

There are times when it seems that my heart is not going to withstand the distance. Then, the telephone rings and someone on the other end of the line says, "Hello! I just called to say I love you!" These words remove the distance and bring us

close. They change everything. One's heart beats stronger, a smile comes across one's face and one's eyes sparkle and shine. It is as though they perform magic!

Words of love have power. They can sustain a heart during days, months, and years—that is what the magazine, *Salude* (Health), stated several days ago.

The problem is that as human beings, we have minimized love as a factor of happiness and health. We forget to love. We no longer have time to love. As a consequence of this, the way that we behave in our relationships has become jeopardized. Without a doubt, we face a lack of expressions of love, not only in our ministry and in daily relationships, but especially within our homes.

My son sings in a group at Paran Adventist Academy which is lead by Jader Santos, and one of the songs that they sing tells us that love never fails. This song warms any heart:

*One does not need to be a genius, or
to be wise
To discover that things are going from
bad to worse
When you lack courage, when you lack
faith,
When it seems that fear silences your
voice.
If you walk alone, if you have no
friends.*

Look up and feel that Someone loves you.
When failure comes, when tears arrive,
Behind this cloud shines the sun.
Know that love never fails,
Know that love is going to overcome the bad,
Even if friends forget,
Even under the strongest of storms.
Know that love never fails
Because Christ is love and He never fails!

At the beginning of this year, stop! Take a few minutes to think about "How well do I love? How much of my love have I devoted to God and His Church? How much of my love have I devoted to my husband or wife and to my children? How much of my love have I devoted to the members of my church, my friends?"

I think that this deserves careful consideration. This can help us to change attitudes and redirect priorities.

God is a specialist on the subject of love. The Bible is full of beautiful statements that not only reveal a romantic and poetic side of God, as well as His interest in showing us that He is love. Love that never fails!

A new year! New opportunities! Today, the phrase "Love one another" acquires a more urgent tone. God expects us to live and reflect His love in the highest degree. Begin by:

- Loving more, through words, attitudes, and gestures.
- Expressing feelings of joy that give vitality to relationships.
- Supporting those who need it.
- Stimulating spiritual and emotional growth of your family.
- Listening more, judging less.
- Sharing words of hope and motivation.
- Forgiving.
- Praying more, communicating with the Source of true love.
- Learning better to walk in humility.

I know that you might be thinking that the ideas above are already part of those who love. But these are the expressions that, if put into practice, produce the most marvelous feelings in the world.

May the prayer of the Apostle Paul be our prayer also throughout this New Year:

"That Christ may dwell in your

hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

May love strengthen us and make us become better individuals. ☺

On Valentine's Day

An old man got on a bus one February 14 carrying a dozen roses. He sat beside a young man. The young man looked at the roses and said, "Somebody's going to get a beautiful Valentine's Day gift."

"Yes," said the old man.

A few minutes went by and the old man noticed that his young companion was staring at the roses. "Do you have a girlfriend?" the old man asked.

"I do," said the young man. "I'm going to see her right now, and I'm going to give her this Valentine's Day card."

They rode in silence for another ten minutes, and then the old man got up to get off the bus. As he stepped out into the aisle, he suddenly placed the roses on the young man's lap and said, "I think my wife would want you to have these. I'll tell her that I gave them to you."

He left the bus quickly. As the bus pulled away, the young man turned to see the old man enter the gates of a cemetery.



Who's That Woman With the Pastor?

James L. Snyder

The most inconspicuous person in the church has to be the pastor's wife. Everybody knows the pastor—he's in front of the congregation at least on a weekly basis and is in the center of everything that goes on in that congregation.

But nobody really knows his wife. I first realized this about 10 years ago after we had just moved to a new church. I went with my wife to the grocery store to help with the shopping when I overheard some women talking. "Who's that woman with our pastor?"

As you might imagine, it put me in a tight spot. I did not know if the women thought I was having an affair or what. I knew then that I had to set them straight. If there is one thing a pastor does not need or want, it is for some women in the church to get the wrong impression. That kind of innuendo has been the ruin of many a fine pastor.

Not wanting to take any chances, my wife and I maneuvered around the store so we would go right past the women. When we got within earshot, I went into action.

"Hello, ladies. My *wife* and I are out shopping. I always go shopping with my *wife* and help with the groceries. My *wife* and I shop here quite often. My *wife* thinks this is the best store in town. My *wife* and I

always shop here." I saw the women look at each other with knowing smiles.

Whew! I knew we had gotten through that one all right. It was clear to me that before our groceries arrived at our house, everyone in the congregation would know that my wife and I were out shopping.

As a pastor, it is important to keep ahead of rumors. Unfortunately, this can be a full-time job. Why is it that people will believe any and every rumor they hear? They only have to hear it once and that's enough. Yet the pastor can make weekly announcements from the pulpit, publish them months in advance in the weekly bulletin and newsletters, and people never hear.

"Oh, the concert was last Sunday night?" they say. "If we had known it, we would have come. We're very sorry we missed it. Are they coming back again?" It makes me wonder what people do during the announcement time.

When it comes to innuendo, rumor, and criticism, the pastor's wife is in a category all her own. Pastors have a national "Pastor's Appreciation Day" in October, but pastors' wives have nothing. Churches do not give them rules, yet people in the church expect much from the pastor's wife.

People expect the pastor's wife to greet everyone she meets with a

Reverend James L. Snyder is an author whose writings have appeared in more than 50 periodicals. In Pursuit of God: The Life of A. W. Tozer, Snyder's first book, won the Reader's Choice Award in 1992 from Christianity Today. Through 25 years of ministry, he and his wife Martha have been involved in three church-planting projects prior to their current ministry at the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Ocala, Florida. The Snyders have three children and two grandchildren.

beautiful smile, even though she sometimes does not feel like smiling. "What's wrong with the pastor's wife?" they ask each other. "She didn't smile at me when I saw her across the street this morning. I wonder if she's fighting with our pastor?"

Among the many talents expected of the pastor's wife is the ability to play the piano and organ, preferably at the same time. "What do you mean you can't play the piano? You're the pastor's wife, aren't you?" Another crucial part of being a pastor's wife is the ability to locate the pastor at all times. People expect the pastor's wife to know her husband's whereabouts no matter what time of the day. Someone may call the parsonage at any time asking for the pastor. If his wife does not know where he is at that moment, they may accuse her of not being interested in her husband's ministry. "I called the parsonage this week and the pastor's wife did not know where her husband was. She doesn't take much interest in the church, does she?"


Then there is the case of the parsonage. The parsonage is the place where the pastor ages. The pastor's wife must keep the parsonage spotless at all times, no matter how many children she has and no matter what other duties she has. At any moment people from the church may drop in, and woe be to the pastor's wife if there is the least little thing out of place.

She must also run that parsonage completely on faith, as cash is not available for such things. There's plenty of money for the church choir, but nothing for the parsonage.

The good minister's wife must harbor a complete disdain for anything brand new. All her clothes, as well as her children's, must come from the Salvation Army store. If she happens to wear a new dress to

church, she is in trouble. "We must be paying our pastor too much money. Isn't that a new dress his wife is wearing?"

In reality, the Bible does not place the pastor's wife above any other woman in the church. Unlike us,

God does not play favorites, nor does He require one thing from one person and something else from another. In God's sight, we are all important and all deserve the same respect and consideration—even the pastor's wife. 

Crocheting Doilies

There was once a man and woman who had been married for more than 60 years. They had shared everything. They had talked about everything. They had kept no secrets from each other except that the old woman had a shoe box in the top of her wardrobe that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about.

For all of these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day the old woman got very sick and the doctor said she would not recover. In trying to sort out their affairs, the old man took down the shoe box and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box.

When he opened it, he found two crocheted doilies and a stack of money totaling \$25,000. He asked her about the contents.

"When we were to be married," she said, "my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was never to argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily."

The old man was so moved, he had to fight back tears. Only two precious doilies were in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in all those years of living and loving. He almost burst with happiness.

"Darling," he said, "that explains the doilies, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?"

"Oh," she said, "that's the money I made from selling the doilies."



Togetherness in Ministry

Getting to the Heart of the Matter

*Dan and Gloria
Bentzinger*

Over the past few years, a new term has developed in Adventist terminology—“team ministry.” Administrators, pastors, and even lay people have expressed to us, “What a wonderful team ministry you have together.” But what really is team ministry? In school we didn’t take Team Ministry 101. In talking with older ministerial couples, when team ministry is described and discussed as something new or special, they say, “We have done that all along.” So what is meant when we loosely throw around the term? In order to give this paper a scholarly touch, we looked up “team” in the dictionary and found the perfect definition: Team—“Where two or more beasts of burden are harnessed together.”

Whenever “team ministry” is mentioned, many ministers’ wives express feelings of bitterness and frustration. Realistically, what do we expect of ministers’ wives? Do we expect a pastor’s wife who may, out of necessity, work full- or part-time, to still be involved as an integral part of her husband’s ministry? Idealistically, some envision the minister’s wife keeping an immaculate home while preparing fantastic meals that would make the Weimar kitchens jealous. She also

should have the best behaved children in the church. She must happily accept all the offices in the church that no one else will have. She visits, travels, and is always available with her husband, as well as conducting five Bible studies each week. On top of this “team ministry,” she is called upon to supplement the family income by working part- or full-time. (Those of you with one or more children in academy or college know of what we speak!) Is this fair? Is this what “team ministry” is all about? We don’t think so.

As we view it, true “team ministry” can realistically only be done by pastoral couples if:

- The wife gets paid by the church.
- The couple is young with no children.
- The couple is older with no large educational or other expenses.

We believe a more appropriate term to be used in describing “team ministry” is “togetherness in ministry.”

We feel that what is needed in ministerial families is for the husband and wife to be united in their vision and in sharing the unique mission of the Adventist church and its ministry. Whether a


Dan and Gloria Bentzinger are evangelists for It Is Written. They have worked in team ministry for over 30 years.

*Through the years,
Gloria and I have taken
the “togetherness”
approach to God’s
call of ministry
in both of our lives.*

pastor’s wife works in the home, marketplace, or by his side, the pastoral couple should share the deep understanding of the only reason the Adventist church exists—the singular message God has called upon it to give to the world, and their God-given call into the Adventist ministry.

There is no other ministry in the world like the Adventist ministry. We are a totally unique church with our urgent message. We are not here for the long haul. Our church was born like a Roman candle fireworks display—short and bright with the great climax of Jesus’ coming! If the pastoral couple jointly understands these concepts and is united together in a holy passion for souls, the church will be revived to the only task Jesus has asked us to do.

We hope the day will come when all those pastors’ wives who choose to be an integral part of a team ministry approach will be reimbursed for their work. In reality, however, with church finances the way they are in many areas, this may not materialize. If the church as a whole returned a true tithe, programs and workers could be greatly increased.

Through the years, both when she worked full-time as an executive secretary apart from the church and also the time she has been remunerated by the church, Gloria and I have taken the “togetherness” approach to God’s call of ministry in both of our lives. 

This Year...

Anonymous

Uow to do some of the things you’ve always wanted to do but couldn’t find the time.

Call up a forgotten friend. Drop an old grudge and replace it with some pleasant memories. Share a funny story with someone whose spirits are dragging.

Vow not to make a promise you don’t think you can keep. Pay a debt. Give a soft answer. Free yourself of envy and malice. Encourage some youth to do his or her best. Share your experience and offer encouragement. Make a real effort to stay in closer touch with family and good friends. Resolve to stop magnifying small problems and shooting from the lip.

Find the time. All of us have the same allotment—24 hours a day. Give a compliment. It could make someone’s day. Think things through. Forgive an injustice. Listen more. Apologize when you realize you were wrong. An apology never diminishes a person. It elevates him. Don’t blow your own horn. If you’ve done something praiseworthy, someone will notice sooner or later.


Try to understand a point of view that is different from your own. Few things are 100 percent one way or another. Examine your demands on others. Lighten up. Take a quiet walk alone when you feel like blowing

your top. Laugh the loudest when the joke is on you.

The sure way to have a friend is to be one. We are all connected by humanity and our need for one another. Avoid malcontents and pessimists. They drag you down and contribute nothing. Be kind. Be gentle. Don’t discourage a beginner from trying something risky. Nothing ventured means nothing gained. Be optimistic. The can-do spirit is the fuel that makes things go. Go to war against animosity and complacency. Express your gratitude. Read something uplifting. Don’t abandon your old-fashioned principles. They never go out of style. When courage is needed, ask yourself, “If not me, who? If not now, when?”

Return those books you borrowed. Reschedule that missed dental appointment. Clean out your closet. Take those photos out of the drawer and put them in an album. If you see litter on the sidewalk, pick it up instead of walking over it.

Get real. Phoniness is transparent as well as tiresome. Take pleasure in the beauty and the wonders of nature. A flower is God’s miracle. Walk tall. Look people in the eye. Don’t be bound by superstition and fear. Smile more. You’ll look 10 years younger. Don’t be ashamed to say, “Have a good day.”

Don’t be afraid to say, “I love you.” Say it again. Say it still one more time. They are the sweetest words in the world. 

This article originally appeared in the Arizona Conference Shepherdess newsletter.

The Tyranny of Things

Pat Reynolds

It wasn't long ago that I began to realize "things" were beginning to tyrannize me. From a material viewpoint it wasn't that I had so little, but rather that I constantly wanted more. And why? Hadn't the apostle Paul stated, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8). And wasn't I in a more luxurious state of affairs than he was when he penned those words from prison? I had several "cloaks," not just one; innumerable books, and even several translations of the Bible.

As a matter of fact, we also had a fairly comfortable home with a small mortgage, two good cars, closets full of clothes, and even a kitchen full of food. I didn't have to work away from home. Then why wasn't I content with what I had?

One day I decided to track down the origin of the wants that assailed me and caused "things" to tyrannize me. Over my second cup of coffee, I read the morning paper and soon discovered the advertisements were getting more of my attention than the news itself. Why want that new velvet pants suit with long skirt to match? I certainly didn't need it and the price was exorbitant. I would seldom have occasion to wear it! Yet here I was giving it more than a passing glance.

Later, at the beauty salon, I picked up a magazine and was tempted by a hand-carved teakwood coffee table from India until I saw the price tag of \$2,000.

In another magazine I paused at a full page picture of an exquisite statue labeled Queen Esther, a porcelain figurine from a limited collection that "could be yours for only \$1,000." I thought of my own tiny collection of king and queen figurines, but the very most I had paid for one was \$10.

Oh well, I began to reassure myself, one day in heaven I would have the privilege of meeting the real Queen Esther.

Next I noticed an advertisement for a cruise to the Bahamas which made our usual vacation trips seem quite unimaginative.

Trading for yet another magazine I saw an ad for jewelry marked "Diamonds say you love her." Aimed at men (though I could hardly picture my spouse giving it a second glance), it insinuated that if your husband really loved you, he would remember your anniversary with an extra diamond ring. No diamond at all decorated my finger—just a plain gold band, but I felt the criterion of diamonds as proof of love was a rather shallow one.

At the supermarket that afternoon

Pat Reynolds is a pen name.

the many convenience items which beckoned me with their attractive packaging practically flew into my shopping cart. The soft drinks and snacks all demanded attention until Isaiah's words reminded me, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?"


Home again, with the groceries put away, I tackled the hall closet—a cleaning job I had put off far too long. Going through the stack of forgotten games, sports equipment, old clothes, and miscellaneous items, I remembered my husband's recent suggestion to hold a garage sale. I would surely have to do so soon. We all seemed to periodically bring home fabulous bargains from other garage sales, most of which were soon stored away. Why were we such acquisitive creatures, I pondered. Pack rats or squirrels had nothing on the Reynolds family!

That night while watching TV, I was besieged by a tasteless parade of commercials for all sorts of gadgets, as well as the usual variety of household cleaning products, toiletries, and cosmetics. In an age of ecology-minded people and proposed energy controls and cutbacks, I was being told I couldn't manage to get through life without electric pencil sharpeners, trash compactors, and toothbrushes. Calculators, transistor radios, and tape recorders had all left the category of luxuries and become necessities, it seemed.

Before retiring for the night, my family and I sat down together. Each one of us had paper and pen with which we made lists of current wants and needs. After much juggling, crossing out here and adding there, we soon began to realize that though our wants were many, our needs were few. We made a covenant to be content with the things we had. We declared war on Madison Avenue and its invasion on our common sense, and vowed not to let it mold

our thinking or create desires for the glittering baubles held in front of us by the gods of this world.

I challenge you to examine yourself. Are you in complete control of

your pocketbook or are you being robbed? Is the tyranny of "things" keeping you from recognizing your real riches in Christ Jesus? 

Appearances Can Be Deceiving . . .

A woman in a faded dress and her husband, dressed in a threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, and walked timidly without an appointment into the Harvard University President's outer office.

The secretary could tell in a moment that this couple had no business at Harvard.

"We would like to see the President of Harvard," the man said softly.

"He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped. "We'll wait," the woman replied. For hours the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away. They didn't and the secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the President, even though it was something she always regretted.

"Maybe if you see them for a few minutes, they'll leave," she said to him.

He sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with this odd couple. The President, stern faced, strutted toward the couple.

The woman told him, "We had a son who attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he died in an accident. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on the campus."

The President wasn't touched . . . he was shocked.

"Madam," he said, gruffly, "we can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did, this place would look like a cemetery." "Oh, no," the woman explained quickly. "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard." The President rolled his eyes. He glanced at the woman's faded dress and the man's threadbare suit, and then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical buildings here at Harvard."

The President was pleased. Maybe he could get rid of them now. The woman turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it costs to start a university? Why don't we just start our own?" Her husband nodded.

The President's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment. Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford got up and walked away. They moved to Palo Alto in California where they established the university that bears their son's name, Stanford University.

The Power of Prayer

Dorothy Biswas

Prayer has always been a big part of my life. I rejoice in the knowledge that God loves me and He hears me. Following are two experiences that reinforce my belief in God's personal concern for me, His child.

My cousin, Shilu, had been very sick, and she sent a message to me requesting a visit. She had just returned from a three-day stay at the Heart Foundation Hospital. Shilu's left side of her body was paralyzed. I received the message on Sunday morning, so I decided to visit her that very night. When I arrived at her home, she was having severe chest pains. Her head was pounding and she was very distressed. I tried

making her comfortable by giving her a hot foot bath. Suddenly, Shilu became chilled and began having trouble breathing. I immediately called my husband, Pastor R. K. Biswas, to tell him to find us a car or ambulance to transport her to the hospital.

In only a matter of moments, Shilu's condition worsened. I feared for her life and I began praying earnestly to the Lord. I told Shilu's sister to begin mouth-to-mouth respiration, and I encouraged the other relatives to refrain from tears. I told them that my Lord Jesus would not let Shilu die.

The doctor reached the house before the ambulance. He checked Shilu's blood pressure and found it to be 200/110. Since it was so high, he gave her medication and sent her to the hospital once the ambulance arrived.

Shilu has recovered and miraculously can now walk. My relatives are awed at the power of my Lord Jesus. I tell them that I believe in Matthew 21:22, which says, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

The second experience I want to share with you involves children. Children have a special place in

God's heart. On March 11, 1999, I, along with 44 ladies and five children, were on our way to the Seventh-day Adventist Maranatha Seminary Church. One of the children, only an eight-month-old baby, became very sick. He was feverish and began having convulsions. His breathing was very labored.

There were six nurses on the bus, so the bus driver stopped so the baby could be ministered to. Someone poured water on the child's head but his condition remained grave. One of the nurses put her hand in the boy's mouth and she found it full of mucus. She tried to clear out his passageway for she knew he was near death. We all joined together in prayer for the child's life.

The bus driver resumed driving, and we headed to a clinic. Because we were in a remote area, we feared no doctor would be available. Fortunately, God heard our prayers, and when we arrived, a physician was there and he stabilized the sick child. Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." God listened to our prayers and heard our knock. What a wonderful God we have!



Dorothy Biswas is the Shepherdess Coordinator at the Bangladesh Union Mission.



Power Plant

Hannele Ottschowski

As a child, I was fascinated by power stations. I loved the transformation plants where I admired all those electrical masts and cables. I had found an odd end of a board and a hammer. I knew where my father kept his nails. And so I started pounding nails into my piece of wood as deftly as my little hands were able to. At last the board was full of nails and all my “electrical masts” were connected to each other in a maze of yarn. Proudly I presented the first in a succession of many “power plants” to my parents, who were amazed at my creativity.

I grew up in a family where we were encouraged to be creative. I was never told, “No, you can’t do that.” Where there was a will, there was a way. Maybe we would substitute some material with what we had at hand, but we always found a way to make do. And so I have tried my hand at many things and learned to do things by trial and error, by watching and improving, finding new ways to make things work.

This background has made me confident—maybe too much so. When my husband says, “We can’t do that, it won’t work,” I say, “Why not? Let’s try!” But it has also made me prone to overdo things. I tend to take on too many things.

We had planned a concert at our church for Sabbath afternoon. I was

involved in all but two of the musical renditions, and I had to rehearse with everybody. I was a busy mother with a family of three children to take care of, and at the same time I had to prepare food for the Sabbath as we had invited some friends to come over for the weekend. When I sat down at the piano to practice, I realized that I had taken on more than I could cope with. My hands were trembling uncontrollably. My heartbeat was racing, and I had the impression that I couldn’t breathe. All I could do was lie down on my bed and try to calm down. And so I started praying, “I know I’ve taken on too much now, Lord. Please help me! I can’t do it by myself. If you want this concert tomorrow, please help me to calm down and give me Your power.” After a while, my heart calmed down and my hands stopped trembling. After half an hour, I was able to get up with new strength. God had wanted to help me all along, but I had forgotten to plug into His power plant. I didn’t have to do it alone. God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

We often try to do everything in our own strength and forget that God wants to help us. This is a risk, particularly for us who are “strong.” I am grateful that I was able to grow

Hannele is a pastor's wife in Germany.



up as a strong and confident person, but it is a challenge for me to learn to rely on God and not on my own strength. It is only when we realize that we are dependent on His power that we can let Him help us. And so we, too, must become weak in order to be strong in God.

Many women in particular are at the end of their tether. Exhausted by all the work they have to manage—in their jobs, at home taking care of their children, and participating in church activities—they often do more than anybody could cope with.


At a recent Women's Ministry retreat, I was amazed by the large number of women who felt the need for renewed strength. I had accessed my email just before I left for work. The speakers for a planned retreat had canceled their appointment with very short notice. The WM director asked me if I had any idea what we should do with this weekend retreat. Should we cancel it, or did I have something I could present? As I drove to work, I thought about this problem and asked God to give me the right ideas as to what I should present if this retreat should take place. And the possible topics surfaced, one after the other. Where do I get power for my everyday life? . . . By the time I arrived at work God had inspired me with a complete set of themes for the weekend. The invitations were sent out. We had imagined a small group of interested women. But we were amazed that we ended up with a house filled to capacity. This retreat was just what these women needed in their search for strength.

Sometimes we feel that we have a mountain to move and have no strength to move even a pebble. Sometimes we have to leave things undone. Maybe it isn't even necessary that these things be done. We need to make sure we are not trying to do things that should be done by others.

But when we are trying to do what God has put in our way to do, He will help us through. But we have to ask Him for help. We have to submit our efforts to Him.

Last summer my husband and I held evangelistic meetings in the Ukraine. My husband had been there previously, and this time I wanted to accompany him. I had heard about his experiences there, but still I didn't really know what to expect. And so I gave the whole project in prayer to the Lord. I asked Him to take care of everything as I didn't even really know what to ask for. We were going to drive 1,100 miles to get there, and knowing that I have a problem with my back which gives me pain after a short time in a car, I was a bit concerned about how I would cope with the long drive. We were to present three lectures each day, and when I saw the hard seats in the auditorium I was shocked. I could never take that! But I sat down anyway. About halfway through the series, I woke up one night to the realization that I had had no pain in my back all the time we had been there or on our way in the car, not even the normal pain I always experienced at home. God's presence in my life became clear to me. He had performed a miracle to give me strength and removed my pain! It was not until I was back home that I experienced back pain again. God had helped even though I had not known what to ask for specifically. But I had given Him charge of the whole project and trusted Him to take care of whatever was necessary.

This trust in God in our daily lives to provide us with strength for each new day is what we need. We need to stay close to Him, to be plugged into His power plant. It is at our disposition. His power is immeasurably greater than we can imagine. Why not ask for it right now?



Out of the Mouths of Children . . .

After church on the way home, a mother asked her small son what they talked about in Sunday School. The little boy told her that they talked about the creation story and how God had taken a rib from Adam's side and made a wife for him. After lunch Mother found him doubled over in pain. Mother asked what was wrong. He replied, "My side hurts, Mummy. I think I'm having a wife."

* * * * *

A little girl walked to and from school daily. Though the weather that morning was questionable she made her daily trek to the elementary school. As the afternoon progressed, the winds whipped up, along with thunder and lightning.

The mother of the little girl felt concerned that her daughter would be frightened as she walked home from school, and she herself feared that the electrical storm might harm her child. Following the roar of thunder, lightning, like a flaming sword, would cut through the sky. Full of concern, the mother quickly got into her car and drove along the route to her child's school. As she did so, she saw her little girl walking along, but at each lightning flash, the child would stop, look up, and smile. Another and another followed quickly, and each time the little girl would look at the streak of light and smile.

When the mother's car drove up beside the child, she lowered the window and called to her, "What are you doing? Why do you keep stopping?" The child answered, "I am trying to look pretty. God keeps taking my picture."

God Intervenes on Behalf of His People

Ernestina Sarfo

Ernestina Sarfo is a pastor's wife who is also a trader and a mother of four daughters. Her husband is a pastor for the Central Ghana Conference, and they live in Kumasi, Africa. Ernestina's interests include correspondence, conducting ladies seminars, teaching Sabbath School, and listening to Christian music.



The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them (Psalm 34:7).

One Sabbath my husband and I went to visit one of his churches, and in the evening before sunset, he ordained the officers who were to take over the office work for the year 2002.

After the ordination service, we set out in a car on a two-kilometre journey back home. My husband, Isaac, drove the car while I sat behind him. While we were coming home, it was nearly 8 p.m. and the road was rough, so he slowed down to 40 kilometres per hour. God led us safely through the muddy and rough road till we got to the station headquarters.

From the station to our home is about a quarter of a kilometre, but steeply sloped. As we were descending the valley, Isaac applied the brake and it failed. The car gathered speed, and I saw that we were in danger. He tried to control the gear, but in vain. I prayed that the Lord might save us. Coming from the top of a hill to the bottom was a terrible thing. Many people were on the street chatting with each other. My husband drove

swerving through the crowds in order to save lives. Finally he turned the steering wheel, and the car jumped over a big ditch and hit a house.

As soon as I opened the gate and came out of the car, the crowd rushed to the scene and asked me, "Mama, are you in good condition?" I said yes, then I went back to the car to find Isaac. I hugged him and asked, "Are you all right?"

He said, "Yes, I am searching for my Bible and church manual."

To our surprise, the crowd helped us remove the car from where it was. And everything was in its own position—the windshield, watertank, headlights, and the brake itself were working. Everybody marveled at the miracle the Lord performed for us that day.

Fellow Shepherdesses around the world, we need not fear as we engage ourselves in the Lord's business, for we are assured of His protection (Romans 8:31). Matthew 28:20 says, "Beloved, I encourage you to remain steadfast in the work of God, knowing for sure that He is always with us, even to the end of the world."

Cheer up! God bless you all. 🙏

Pineapple Upside-Down Cake: A Tribute to Mum

*Lorna Christo-
Samraj*

The little notepaper was lined with piano keys on the bottom. At the top it read, "Take Note..."

I had married and moved away from home only a short while ago when I wanted to bake a Pineapple Upside-Down Cake. I had no recipe and not enough confidence to toss in a few handfuls of ingredients like Mum often did, so I wrote to mother for the recipe. This was the piece of paper I got back.

It's difficult to understand how a little piece of notepaper with a recipe on it can say so much about a person. Mum hadn't just picked some piece lying around; she hadn't just torn a scrap out of an old notebook. No. She was particular about the way she did things. Her slim five-foot petite frame was always neatly and tastefully dressed. The notepaper was filled with recipe instructions in her tidy handwriting.

I read it as I prepared to bake one Friday afternoon.

1. Cook pineapple rings with sugar and cool. Why didn't she just say, "Open a can of pineapple rings." That would be quick and easy. But that was mother all right. She made most things from scratch—noodles for lasagna, gluten for roasts. She believed in good wholesome cooking. My mind filled with pictures—

pictures of mother standing over a pot of bubbling guava cheese, sweat on her brow; mother peeling and slicing baskets of mango to be bottled; mother picking gooseberries from her always-lush garden for her famous gooseberry jam. We never lacked a table filled with good food.

2. Sprinkle greased pan with brown sugar and cover with pineapple rings.

3. Pour over one recipe of sponge cake batter.

When I read this part, I could hardly believe my eyes! This was the part I needed the most. What was she thinking when she wrote out this recipe? Anyone who's eaten Pineapple Upside-Down Cake can guess that you sprinkle sugar and throw in a few pineapple rings. That's the easy part! I was frantic. I was living in India, and I could not run down to the store and get a cake mix and I certainly did not have time to wait for Mum to send me the sponge cake recipe!

Of course, this recipe was vintage Mum. She was so helpful when it came to giving instruction, counsel, and advice, but she always left room for creativity and thought. She had always given me plenty of practice for working things out on my own. She wanted me to experiment and make new discoveries.

Lorna Christo-Samraj is the daughter of Birol Christo. She grew up in India as a pastor's daughter.

*I think of Mum and smile
as I smell the aroma
of the Pineapple
Upside-Down Cake that
always seems to turn
out fine.*

I accepted this recipe as a challenge. I had watched Mum mix batter for cakes on numerous occasions. I had done many myself, without a recipe. Only she had always been there to turn to, to ask advice from. Now I was on my own. I got out my mixing bowl, the measuring cups and spoons, and tried to recall Mum's "one" recipe—one cup sugar, one egg, one cup milk, one teaspoon vanilla, one teaspoon baking powder, etc.

4. Bake until done at 350 degrees. Turn over while hot.

Of course, I would bake the cake until it was done! Who would want to eat a cake that had not been sufficiently cooked? I put the cake in the oven and watched and waited in suspense to see how it would turn out. As I watched the cake, I wondered how many long, lonely hours and years Mum had spent watching me grow up, puzzling over how I would turn out. Soon the cake was done, and I had a perfect golden brown Pineapple Upside-Down Cake. The once crisp, clean notepaper with the recipe on it has gathered some food stains over the years. It has moved from one house to another. Now 13 years later and in another country, I still take it out when I bake a Pineapple Upside-Down Cake. I think of Mum and smile as I smell the aroma of the Pineapple Upside-Down Cake that always seems to turn out fine.



When Joy Is Gone

Jacqueline Hoshing-Clarke

David lost his joy. Psalm 51 tells us he lost his joy because of his own sin. David violated the sixth commandment and broke the seventh. With no joy in his life, David's spirit was broken. He was both an adulterer and murderer. I imagine his feelings of self-worth were as low as they could go. Perhaps he even wanted to die. Thankfully, David saw himself as he really was, and he sought God with his whole heart.

David cried to God for mercy, cleansing, and forgiveness. He realized that it was against God that he had ultimately sinned, for all sin is against God. David, the man described as a man after God's own heart, prayed earnestly for a clean heart, a right spirit, and restored joy.

He yearned and longed for the experience of joy and gladness in the Lord.

God did not forsake David. He heard his cry. He inclined His ear unto him and answered David. He gave David peace and restored his joy. What a merciful God we serve!

Like David, we too sometimes lose our joy. We may not have committed adultery or murder, but other conditions caused by sin make us joyless. We may feel weak and helpless, but take heed. At such times, we tend to lean heavily on the Lord and we are given the opportunity to get closer to Jesus.

Fortunately, we serve a God who is powerful and who is able to restore joy. He is able to renew the right spirit in us. He can deliver us from ills and bring back sunshine into our homes.

In our times of joylessness, we must continue to trust and serve the Lord. We must seek Him with our whole hearts like David did. Despite our flaws and difficult circumstances, God will give us strength to carry on. In His own time, He will restore our joy.

Remember, the darkest hour is just before dawn. Do not give up now, for Jesus is coming soon. Joy, real joy, will soon be here.



Jacqueline Hope HoShing-Clarke is director of pre-college studies at West Indies College in Jamaica. She and her husband, Pastor Bylton Clarke, have two teenage children. She loves reading, writing, traveling, and flower gardening.



I Just Can't Cope

Mary Barrett

Mary has trained for the ministry and enjoys working with her husband Jonathan. She specializes in evangelism, prayer ministries and women's ministries. The Barrett family includes two daughters who love to shop, and Mary loves to join them! She also loves being with friends and family, walking, cross-stitch, and making bread.



I couldn't believe what was happening to me. I, Mary Barrett, usually calm, composed, optimistic and positive, was falling apart. I just couldn't cope with the changes that had burst into my life in a short space of time.

I couldn't cope with our recent move. Usually, when we move to another church, we've been able to find a house immediately. This time we had no such luck. Here it was, nine months later, and we still lived in a tiny flat. All of our possessions, save a suitcase each and a small bookcase of essentials, remained in storage. We felt our lives were on hold.

I also was struggling with our new church. We had no honeymoon period as we reeled from one crisis to another. The challenges were such that even King Solomon would have been tempted to ask God for more wisdom!

Neither could I cope with watching our two daughters struggling to settle into their new school, new church and new surroundings. During our cozy chats together, they would confide that they were no longer "happy" and my heart would break.

And my coping mechanism went into overload when one of my sisters

found out that her second kidney transplant was failing. My kidney was an exact match. Confusion grew as I longed to give Gerry my kidney and yet I knew my children needed stability and security. Who needed me most, my sister or my daughters?

As a result, I felt overwhelmed. Intellectually, I knew that God had it all under control. I knew He could take what seemed like a tangled mess of muddles and create something good. However, what I knew in my brain, I didn't feel in my heart. I felt distraught. There were too many difficulties and no obvious solutions.

As pastors' wives, we can be sure that at some point in our lives, we are going to face situations that we struggle to cope with. Those "I can't cope" experiences can trickle into our lives in many different disguises: clashes at church, hassles at home, worries at work, problems in our personal lives, or sometimes a combination of everything at once. Some of the situations are short-lived; other times we feel as if we are being sucked into a swirling spiral of calamities from which we cannot escape. How do we cope? For me, the remedy was simple. My daughters and I stayed at my parents' home during a school holiday. I spent a lot of time talking, walking, praying,

and spending time with God. As a result, I felt much better.

The Bible gives us many snapshots of those who struggled with episodes of “I can’t cope.” Think of Martha, who, with a pressure-cooker-like explosion, couldn’t cope with her failed expectations of Mary. Zero in on Elijah, who at times couldn’t cope with the stress of his ministry. Pencil sketch with your eye Moses who no longer could cope with being “Mr. Fix-it” and struck the rock twice. Linger on Peter in the courtyard who couldn’t cope with the unexpected as he denied Jesus three times. Each person found relief when their “I can’t cope” situation was shared with God. We, too, can do the same. In fact, Jesus very clearly shows us what to do when we just can’t take any more. Come with me as we peek in on Jesus’ “I can’t cope” experience.

Use your imagination and paint a picture of the Garden of Gethsemane using water colors. Draw in the distraught, despairing Jesus pleading with His father to spare Him from the cruelties of the cross. In Mark 14, we find a vivid portrayal of Jesus. He is confronting the reality of His impending death, and He is struggling with the situation.

We hear His voice in the sleepy silence of the night as He passionately pleads, wearily whispering, boldly begging His Father for freedom from the fate He is about to face. His mind is in turmoil as He rapidly paces the garden, His long strides causing His robe to flap urgently about His legs. We see Him dropping to His knees with a thud, hands clasped in prayer, head upturned as He searches the heaven for comfort from God. And we see Him falling onto the damp, dirty ground, His fingers clutching at clumps of slippery grass covered with the evening dew, sobbing as only those in anguish can do. We smell the sense of fear, terror, and horror that engulfs His body as

droplets of blood form on His glistening head.

For Jesus, His “I can’t” situation was connected with the pain of loss. To be wrenched away from the love of the Father was a death in itself. How did Jesus cope? He did it by turning to the only One who could help—God. As a result, the picture of pain is transformed into a portrait of peace, a peace that promises hope.

In ministry, we experience a lot of “loss” situations. Frequently, we lose the house we have turned into a

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Possibly because our
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home, we lose the strangers we have turned into friends, we lose the church members who have become our brothers and sisters. As wives, we lose the jobs that fulfill us, we lose the simple, everyday routines of life that have to be established over again and we may even lose the dreams that we have not had time to turn into reality. Jesus shows us what to do when we go through not only those but other kinds of “I can’t cope” situations. We can learn how to cope by studying how Jesus coped.

In spite of the anguish that was bubbling away inside Him, Jesus

took the time to be with God. Even when He knew that His time on earth was running out, He still made time for God. Ellen White tells us, “Christ found joy and comfort in communion with His Father. Here He could unburden His sores that were crushing Him.” Jesus was able to cope because He had a deep relationship with God. If we want to learn how to cope with the disappointments of life, we must first learn how to experience the joy of knowing God.

When Jesus was crushed by the crisis of the cross, He focused on God. Consequently, He did not lose hope. First Corinthians tells us, “the God of hope will fill us with His joy so that we will abound in hope.” So, we can face our “I can’t cope” situations with the sure expectations that God will do something about them.

Like Jesus, we need to spend as much time as possible in God’s company. Like Jesus, we need to spend constant, unhurried time with God so that we will know in our hearts and not just in our heads, that God has a thousand ways to deal with our unresolvable difficulties. It is only when we sit with God that we will know in our hearts that nothing is beyond His greatness, His power, His wisdom. And it is only when we sit with God that He can fill us with hope. One of the reasons I went through my “I can’t cope” situation is that I put aside my time with God to deal with all the other issues demanding my attention, but once I allowed God first place in my life, I had the conviction that God could sort things out.

Why is it that God seems silent when we desperately need Him to touch our hearts? Possibly because our emotions form a barrier between us. Look at how Jesus approached God with His “I can’t cope” situation. His first prayers were not

“your will be done,” but rather “take it away,” “get me out of this situation,” “I do not want to face this.” He talked to God about how He felt. Tell God what is destroying you. When we express our emotions fully to God, we stop seeing problems and start seeing possibilities where God can work.

Janice, a pastor’s wife, went to visit a counselor. She talked of the difficult church her husband pastored. She found herself sobbing uncontrollably and apologizing for her behavior. The counselor told her that it was okay to feel sad and cry. Sometimes, as pastors’ wives, we cannot express what we feel to anyone, we have no close friends, we don’t want to burden our already overburdened husbands, and we feel disloyal to God if we don’t respond with a “Praise the Lord” to every situation. But our God is an accepting God who says it’s okay to grieve, to hurt, to cry about what is going on in your life. It is okay to share what you feel with other pastors’ wives and ask for their support, just as Jesus did with the three disciples He took to the garden.

About six years ago, six pastors’ wives and I started a circle of prayer. Each month we mail each other our prayer requests, and every Monday morning we fast and pray for one another. The support we feel from one another is incredible. Sharing what you feel with God and being supported in prayer will make a tremendous difference in the way you cope.

Jesus also shows us that we need to place our “I can’t cope” situations into the hands of God by asking Him to deal with them in His way and not our own. We know this, but it is something we struggle with. To hand over to God our plans for what we want to achieve, our plans for those we love, our plans for the way we want to live our lives, can be scary.

As much as Jesus shrank away from the cross, He felt safe enough with God to place His very life in God’s hands to do with as He wished. How safe do you feel with God?

God loves us and does not want us to be crippled by our “I can’t cope” situations. If you ever doubt His love, just spend some time sitting by the cross. Because of that cross, it is safe for you to place those things that you struggle with in His hands. Because of that cross, you can place your heartaches in God’s hands and know that God will unleash His incredible power to work in the most exciting ways.

Remember, though, that giving your difficulties to God may not mean that they will be wiped away with a magic wand. Jesus’ “I can’t cope” situation was not taken from Him. He still went to the cross. But He was able to face it with firm faith in His Father. Jesus’ “I can’t cope” situation became the greatest blessing in our lives. Perhaps your “I can’t cope” situation may become a great blessing in your life.

Does it all work? Well, we are still without a house. I still can’t work as my heart would like, my daughters are still not happy, our church still has its difficulties, and my sister still needs a kidney. Nothing much has changed except me! Instead of saying “I can’t cope,” I now say “I can hope.” I can hope in the God who has the very best planned for my family, hope in the God who loves us too much to let us go through anything that will not turn out to be the blessing we need. Instead of feeling discouraged, I feel excited. I feel joy. I wait with anticipation to see the solutions God has for our problems. And I feel a sense of security and serenity in knowing that my problems are in His hands.

So just remember, when you can’t cope, hang on to the One who can give you hope—God!

The Second Ten Commandments

Thou shalt not worry, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.

Thou shalt not be fearful, for most of the things we fear never come to pass.

Thou shalt not cross bridges before you come to them, for no one has yet succeeded in accomplishing this.

Thou shalt face each problem as it comes, for you can only handle them one at a time anyway.

Thou shalt not take problems to bed with you; they make very poor bedfellows.

Thou shalt not borrow other people’s problems.

Thou shalt not try and relive yesterday for good or ill; it is gone for ever. Give the past to God and concentrate on the present.

Thou shalt be a good listener, for only when you listen do you hear ideas different from your own.

Thou shalt not be bogged down by frustration, for 90% is rooted in self-pity and will interfere with positive action.

Thou shalt count thy blessings, never overlooking small ones, as many small blessings make a big blessing.

Motherhood and Me

Sylvia Ellis



Write about motherhood, the editor says. She has a story from a new mother and wants one from a wise (read old), experienced one. I don't know about qualifying for the "wise" part. (Do we ever?) But since my "baby" turned 30 last year, I have to admit I qualify for the "old and experienced" part.

So I guess the place to begin is at the beginning. We were married five years before our first son was born. The first two years we were busy finishing college and seminary. Then

I quit working, intending to start a family. But nothing happened. I attended baby showers for friends, welcomed the little newcomers, and felt an ongoing ache and emptiness in my own heart. Finally we applied to an adoption agency. When they called for the first interview appointment, I had to cancel it. It had happened. I was pregnant!

I remember the sensation I caused the first time I appeared at a church function in what was obviously a maternity outfit, and how excited the church members were for us. The baby's due date fell at about the time of camp meeting! In those days, camp meeting occupied almost a month of a young minister's life every summer with two weeks of camp pitch, ten days of camp meeting, and another half a week of camp take-down, and one didn't just ask to be excused! Besides, my husband, as waterfront director, had to be at all the summer camps too! So either I stayed home alone or took my baby equipment along and went with him. I chose the latter and waddled around the campground, helping as best I could, making everyone nervous. (At worship one morning before work started, the president handed my husband the worship book to read to the group of ministers. He got as far as the title, "Patiently Waiting" and everyone

cracked up in very unworship-like laughter.)

Stephen checked into the world at 9 pounds 4 ounces in the Portage, Wisconsin, hospital just as camp meeting was beginning and got announced over the loudspeakers in the main auditorium. So he attended camp meeting before he ever went home. In his brand new baby buggy, it didn't make any difference to him. My husband Fred walked around with a non-stop grin, and I was in such a state of euphoria that it wouldn't have mattered *where* I was. I can remember waking up in the middle of the night and just gazing in awe at this wonderful baby, as if I still couldn't quite believe it had actually happened to me!

After that, Tim and David followed at two-year intervals, and the three little Ellis boys became a well-known sight at subsequent camp meetings and workers' meetings. We thought our family was complete, but after going to Pakistan Adventist Seminary to teach, Daniel joined them as an unplanned addition. (His birth in a foreign hospital is another story in itself.)

So what is motherhood? To me at this stage, it is a kaleidoscope of memories: tiny baby clothes, dirty diapers to wash (no disposable ones then), interrupted sleep, rocking chair time to soothe a fussy baby,

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first smiles, first steps, first words. It was parading down the sidewalk pushing a stroller with the dog on a leash fastened to the handle, followed by a small tricycle and a larger tricycle, just to get out of the house for a bit. It was cuddly story times, Sabbath School lessons, memory verses, songs, and bedtime prayers, trips to the park, visits to proud grandparents, and carting three small boys to three church services in one Sabbath, struggling alone trying to keep them from disturbing the congregation too much while Daddy was up front preaching. (Once, getting up from my knees after the prayer, I found that Steve had slipped away and was kneeling beside his father on the platform copying his position exactly, to the delight of the congregation. Or having one of them holler out in the middle of a wedding, "There's my Daddy!")

Then came motherhood as a missionary, traveling halfway around the world on airplanes with three little boys under six and 13 suitcases to keep track of, with the boys waking up bright-eyed and eager for the day at 4 a.m. and conking out for the night about 3:00 in the afternoon, too sleepy for supper for the first few weeks after arriving. It was trying to juggle homeschooling (along with caring for a baby and a pre-schooler) till I was weary and ready to send them all home to their mother (only I was the mother!). It was trying to shelter them from curious villagers who followed, stared, and pinched to see if white skin was the same as brown.

One vivid memory was taking newborn Daniel to the village Branch Sabbath School my husband was conducting, and having him snatched from my arms by one of the local women, then passed like an offering plate up and down the rows of villagers seated on the ground,

and brought back to me with a pile of coins and paper rupee notes on his tummy. His arrival made my husband a *baarda sahib* (big man), particularly blessed by Allah who had given him *four* sons. (The principal, in contrast, who had fathered only daughters, received their sympathies and encouragement to "Keep trying, Sahib!").


Then it was splashing with their friends in a small cement swimming pool in our yard on hot afternoons, soccer games on the lawn which threatened the flower beds, family bicycle rides along the canal banks, vacations in the mountains and at the coast, chasing butterflies, playing with new puppies, working on A.J.Y. honors and crafts, with Mom trying to provide activities similar to what they might have been getting at home, and listening to them chatter with their local playmates in a jumbled jargon of English, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, and sign language (the little boys all seeming to understand each other perfectly), with dad worrying if they would ever readjust to proper English when they got back to the U.S. (They did!).

Once we returned to the U.S., motherhood included becoming a "taxi service," delivering to and picking up from kindergarten, church school, swimming lessons, music lessons, Pathfinders, and other activities. There was a sequence of pets: dog, cat, gerbils, guinea pigs, hamsters, and tanks of fish. Of course, there was homework to supervise, multiplication tables to learn, birthday parties, Christmas gatherings, picnics, camping trips, etc.

Before we knew it, we were packing them off to academy and then to college. Motherhood now included trying to help earn enough money to keep them there. Life included honor rolls (and learning disabilities with accompanying struggles),

thrilling at seeing them perform in programs and march in graduations, cringing at phone calls about too many tardinesses and other miscellaneous misdemeanors, and welcoming them home with their favorite foods on homecoming weekends. (Also churning through the heaps of accumulated laundry they brought home for Mom to do.) We endured sibling rivalries, went through the motorcycle stage and a sequence of old cars which seemed to constantly need myriad repairs. We had our share of teenage rebellion ("Don't stuff religion down my throat!"), a typical assortment of sicknesses, physical and emotional problems, and various other unexpected surprises related to the process of growing up.

Memories include outdoor ice skating, backpacking and canoeing trips, and other neat vacations to make lasting memories. We rejoiced at their successes, agonized over their failures, experienced the joy of their baptisms (and later one rebaptism), two marriages, one divorce, a medley of laughter and tears, despair and thrills, which are still ongoing. In other words, motherhood (or fatherhood) is an all-absorbing condition that has no end as long as life lasts. (I remember a 90-year-old man in one of our churches coming to my husband in great concern over his "boy's" problems. His "boy" was 75!)

Perhaps God gives us this privilege and responsibility to help us realize, at least in a small way, how much *He* cares about *His* earthly children, loving, forgiving, worrying, rejoicing, always ready to pick them up when they fall, sorrowing when they go astray, and ready to take them back in when they need Him. A young mother looking ahead asked me, "How do you do it?" I answered, "One day at a time." And that is all God asks of us, too. 

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