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INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

FAMILY and the PASTOR

100 years of family
ministries in the
Seventh-day
Adventist Church

06

THE ELIJAH
MESSAGE FOR TODAY

11

"I NEARLY KILLED MY
WIFE"

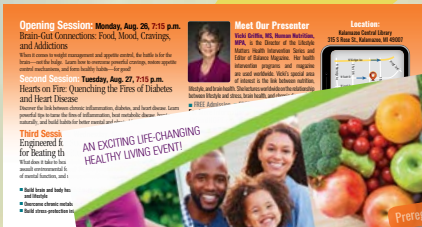
22

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06

The Elijah message for today

JOHN B. YOUNGBERG

Restoration of the family lies at the heart of our end-time message.

11

"I nearly killed my wife": 5 ways to keep your (pastoral) marriage alive

GÁBOR MIHALEC

When your patterns of work are destroying those you love, it's time to make a change.

14

A centennial family ministries celebration: An interview with Ron and Karen Flowers

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

Celebrating the past and rejoicing that God is still using pastors to restore families.

18

Team ministry: A blessing to families

JONAS AND RAQUEL ARRAIS

Team ministry, in all its varieties, can still halve the burden and double the blessing.

22

Clinging to Jesus in a foreign land

JARED AND KATIE MILLER

When surrounded by the new and unfamiliar, know that God is still sufficient.



4 | GUEST EDITORIAL



25 | RESOURCES



26 | REVIVAL & REFORMATION



28 | DATELINE



30 | PRACTICAL POINTERS

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Adventist Family Ministries: A retrospective

An 86-year-old widow at the time, Ellen White invited Arthur Whitefield Spalding—a Seventh-day Adventist educator and author doing some editorial work for her—to engage in a serious exchange at her home in Elmhaven, near Saint Helena, California. It was 1913, just two years ahead of her death, when she soberly championed a pressing issue on her heart by stating: “I want to talk with you,” she said, “about the importance of the work to be done for the parents of the church.” She continued, “The work of parents underlies every other.” Then she concluded by emphatically stating: “It is the very most important work before us as a people, and we have not begun to touch it with the tips of our fingers.”¹

A few years later, on October 8, 1919—the first year after the end of World War I; the same year of the Paris Peace Conference at the Palace of Versailles, the year in which Mahatma Gandhi declared an All India Strike against the Rowlatt Act and in which a law providing for full women’s suffrage in the Netherlands and the United States was introduced—the General Conference Committee voted to create the Home Commission, which became operative in 1922 with Arthur Whitefield Spalding as the leader. Spalding worked in this capacity with his wife Maud until 1941. Spalding produced literature for the education of the entire family. A series of pamphlets was developed, whose content dealt with the various stages of

family life, titled *The Christian Home Series*. Arthur Spalding wrote the lessons, and Maud Spalding scored them.

This is the reason we are celebrating 100 years of deliberate ministry to families in the Seventh-day Adventist Church this year. And while we may have gone beyond just touching this most important of ministries with the tips of our fingers, it is still “the very most important work before us as a people” to ensure a viable church in the days ahead, capable of fulfilling the great commission of making disciples for the kingdom of God. It is, indeed, the heart of the Elijah message of restoration that has been entrusted to us.

On this very point, Ellen White declares: “The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the ‘issues of life’; and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences.”²

So, we resolutely believe the future of the church and the world is predicated on the intersection of family life and spirituality. To be sure, the family circle is the social location where children are nurtured and learn the values of the kingdom of God. These are the ideals inspired by God and postulated by the apostle Paul that proclaim: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23).³ This is truly the crux of the matter.

We proffer that if the Adventist Church is to remain the relevant revelation to the world of a God who is love, full of grace, and committed to saving a planet that has lost its compass and all hope,

then fostering healthier marriages and families will be the deliberate and sustained strategic focus of our existence. This type of intentionality is what will make operational in our global family the inspired assertion, “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.”⁴ This culture of warmth and regard for each other advanced in our families—despite our imperfections—will bring out the central creed of the gospel in the words of Jesus, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

It is our longing that this edition of *Ministry* will not only mark 100 years of Family Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church but will also be a clarion call to our collective ministerial family to boldly proclaim the salvific gospel of healthy family relations, embracing afresh the prophetic revelation, “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that

great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents” (Mal. 4:5, 6a, NIV).

May this become a reality in our lifetimes is our prayer.



- 1 Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1962), 201, 202.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 349.
- 3 Scripture references are from the English Standard Version, except where noted.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 32.

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THE ELIJAH MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Restoration of the family lies at the heart of our end-time message.



JOHN B. YOUNGBERG, EdD, is a professor emeritus of Andrews University and cofounder of Family Life International (1975) on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

In 1913, two years before her death, Seventh-day Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White called Arthur Spalding into her office. Spalding was a young pastor who had been working for her as a literary assistant. She spoke to him about the great work to be done for families. This, she said, was the most important work—fathers and mothers learning how to work for and save their children. Spalding accepted the trust and, in 1919, when the General Conference launched the Home Commission, he was asked to be the leader.

In 1933 (May 18–June 8), Spalding published a four-part series for the *Review and Herald* that brought the Elijah message prominently before ministers and parents in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was entitled, “In the Spirit and Power of Elijah.”

How fitting that in the centennial celebration of this founding message in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we reflect together on the Elijah message and its meaning for families.

The biblical basis of the Elijah message

In the days of Ahab, king of the 10 northern tribes of Israel, starting about 860 B.C., Elijah’s 30-second prayer was heard by thousands of apostate Baal worshipers gathered on Mount Carmel. “That this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back again” (1 Kings 18:37).¹ Then come seven epochal words, “Then the fire of the LORD fell” (v. 38).

The final words of Old Testament prophecy were written by Malachi (his name means “My Messenger”) about 430 B.C. They are echoed in the first prophetic words recorded in the New Testament by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5, 6). They are also the words spoken by Jesus to His three closest disciples: “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things” (Matt. 17:11).

These words applied to John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the first coming of Christ. They also apply to those preparing the way for the second coming of Christ, those who proclaim the eternal gospel found in the three angels’ messages (Rev. 14:6–12). What today’s fallen culture has destroyed, the Elijah message will restore. And Ellen White declares, “The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home.”²

The essence

I had diligently studied the Elijah message for 30 years before I learned what its two key points were.

Key 1: The essence of the Elijah message lies in claiming the merits of the blood of the Innocent Sacrifice for us and our children. In answer to Elijah’s prayer on Mount Carmel, “the fire of the LORD fell.” Where did the fire of God’s wrath deserve to fall? It should rightfully have fallen on the thousands of Baal devotees and blot them off the map. Where did it fall? It fell on the innocent sacrifice instead. Ellen White says: “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. . . . He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.”³

Key 2: The victory in the Elijah message lies in claiming the power of the Holy Spirit for ourselves and our children. The dynamite of the “Spirit and power of Elijah” that filled the life of Elisha with

a double portion; of John the Baptist, Elijah's New Testament counterpart; and of today's Elijahs, who will proclaim the everlasting gospel to a perishing world, is the Holy Spirit. He is Christ's representative and will descend in our lives with latter rain power (see Joel 2:23–29). His infilling will enable us to be victorious as we live through the final chapters in the earth's sinful history. He has the power not only to give us revival and victory but also to restore what is broken in our relationships.⁴

What happens when the Elijah message is lived out?

I think of a young lady by the name of Doris. Doris was raised in an Adventist home. She went to Adventist elementary school, academy, and college. But when the day came that she could legally do what she wanted to do, she was gone.

Doris went to the big city, which offered a myriad of interesting things. Between the money, bright lights, and entertainment, there was little time for church. Doris was enjoying her life in the city, but when she had a little time in her apartment and began to think of times past, she really did love and miss her mom and dad. On Friday nights in particular, Doris would begin to have a little nostalgia for home. *Is Mom playing the piano? Are they listening to songs for Sabbath? Are they eating cinnamon rolls this Friday night as we always had when I was home?*

Another Friday night, another battle of nostalgia. *What are Mom and Dad doing now?* Something was tugging at Doris's heartstrings. One night, she picked up her phone. "Hello, Dad, Mom? It's me, Doris. I love you. I'm coming home!" Doris not only returned to her blood family she also came back to her church family. There was joy in that home and in heaven that night.

Rebuilding the altars

Before the miracle could occur on Carmel's heights, the broken-down altar had to be repaired. What percentage of Seventh-day Adventist families report daily family worship? According to Global Church Member Surveys recently published by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research based on data collected in 2017–2018, about 37 percent of the global respondents reported daily family worship. About 35 percent reported family worship less than monthly.

Sadly, in the North American and the Northern Asia-Pacific Divisions, there is a 10 percent

increase in members in the 2017–2018 survey reporting family worship less than once per month or not at all. Yes, today's culture is making inroads. There is time for television, the internet, and cell phones, but there isn't much time for Jesus in the family circle. And of course, the goal is not once-a-day or once-a-week family worship—but worship twice a day—welcoming angel protection in the morning hours and praising God near the sunset hour for His goodness. This, together with personal devotions, strengthens our daily walk with God.

Today, more than half of Seventh-day Adventist family altars need repair. A quarter of a century ago, in a classic study completed by L. Edgel Phillips in a doctoral dissertation at Andrews University titled "An Exploratory Study of the Aims and Methods of Family Worship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," Phillips arrived at what is probably the most comprehensive research-generated model of family worship ever done. Thirty-one aims of family worship emerged. When analyzed, these telescoped into God-oriented aims and family-directed aims.

The God-oriented aims included

- making Jesus real in the life,
- drawing the family close to God,
- being a link between God and the family, and
- claiming the merits of the blood for the forgiveness of sin.

The family-directed aims included

- promoting the religious heritage of the family,
- making happy memories,
- providing time to teach family values, and
- drawing the family members closer to one another.

The most powerful method found in drawing families closer to God and to each other was "relational self-disclosure":

- asking forgiveness for wrongs done to each other,
- talking about what God means to each individual,
- greeting and welcoming each other,
- discussing the problems of the day,
- expressing thanks for the good things that have happened,
- sharing experiences of the day,
- making prayer requests,

- › inviting the Holy Spirit into each person's life, and
- › quoting Bible promises.

The second most powerful method was affirmation:

- › A personal sense of well being
- › An accepting, loving, affirming atmosphere, and
- › Adequate time

The third most powerful method for drawing families closer to God and to each other was prayer. This included praying around the circle, praying sentence prayers holding hands, taking turns praying, and praying both morning and evening.

An unforgettable worship experience

It happened at Ouray, Colorado. We were vacationing at the lovely Amphitheater Campground. Nature was superb, but inside our trailer, the family members were not talking to one another. Can you guess what day of the week it was? Sabbath. This particular morning, my wife Millie had *had it*. She was ready to turn in her "mother button."

Thinking it might help, I asked the family to go for a hike and have our worship service out on the trail. Far up the mountainside at a bend in the trail, it began to rain. We found refuge under a large pine tree and sat on a log. There we began to evaluate our family problems. Without negative emotions, we began to communicate. After a while, I said, "We all seem to have the same goals. Why don't we join hands in a circle and make a covenant with God and determine to support and help one another?"

The rain fell on our little circle and the peace of the Holy Spirit showered on us. I prayed that our covenant would endure. Millie prayed that God would help her to be a good mother. Our son John prayed that God would help us polish

up the rough places in our lives. Our other son Wes thanked God that we had an opportunity to understand one another better. The boys then ran down the mountain. I asked, "Millie, do you think God is going to answer our prayers?"

Years later, speaking appointments took us to the West Coast. As we were winging our way back home, the captain's voice came over the intercom. "On the right side of the aircraft, you have an excellent view of Telluride, Colorado." My eyes followed the road from Telluride winding through the canyons toward Ouray, some 30 miles beyond. I could see the majestic ridges above the Amphitheater Campground. Somewhere down there at a bend in the trail under a pine tree was a sacred spot in the history of the Youngberg family. A place where Millie had answered my question with confident affirmation, "Yes, I do."

You undoubtedly also have some sacred spots—yes, even covenant spots in your family's history. Share them with each other.

“Before the miracle could occur on Carmel's heights, the broken-down altar had to be repaired. What percentage of Seventh-day Adventist families report daily family worship?”



Our children will stand alone

Elijah stood alone atop Mount Carmel surrounded by King Ahab, his soldiers, 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah, and thousands of Baal devotees. But was he alone? Thousands of angels attended him. In addition, God took time to assure him that there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Elijah and God made a majority!

Daniel learned faithfulness to God in the family worships and activities in his Judean home. When carried captive to Babylon, he was ready to stand alone when expected to eat of the king's dainties, which had been offered to idols. Daniel stood alone when the law went forth that all must worship the king. He stood alone (with angels around him) when thrown into the lions' den.

Someday, you and each of your children may stand alone when laws that curtail your religious freedoms will be proclaimed and enforced. Ellen White states, "This day is just before us. The members of the church will individually be tested and proved. They will be placed in circumstances where they

will be forced to bear witness for the truth. Many will be called to speak before councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone. The experience which would have helped them in this emergency they have neglected to obtain, and their souls are burdened with remorse for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges."⁵

Earth's faithful children will not be alone when they stand victorious on the sea of glass and receive for time and eternity the crown of life. Let's not waste our opportunities or neglect our privileges. Let's preach and practice the Elijah message now.

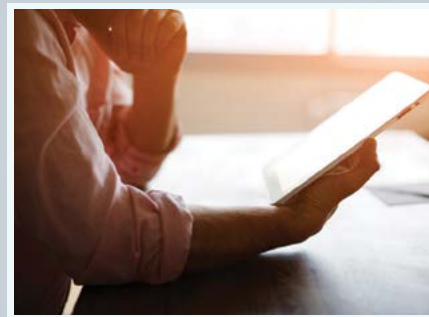


- 1 Scripture references are from the New King James Version.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), 349.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 25.
- 4 See John B. Youngberg, *Heart Tuning: A Guide to Better Family Worship* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985).
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1889), 463.

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“I NEARLY KILLED MY WIFE”

5 ways to keep your (pastoral) marriage alive

I was young, naïve, and inexperienced. We had been married for three years and had our first child, Viktor. A wonderful boy, six months old, he was the sunshine of our lives. My wife, Dora, was a strong young woman, blooming with the reality that her childhood dream of becoming a mother was finally fulfilled. I was totally devoted to my church, serving God and His people full time. My idea at that time was that if I gave myself fully to the Lord, He would take care of my family.

Fully packed Sabbaths, visitation on Sundays, Bible classes, seminars, and evangelistic meetings in the evenings during the week made up my habitual routine. Suddenly, dramatic changes took place in my wife. She began to lose weight inexplicably. She dropped from 132 pounds (60 kilograms) to 83 pounds (38 kilograms) in just a few months. She became very withdrawn and silent. She cried incessantly and became unable to care for our son and home. I literally saw life leaving her body. It was a real shock to me. Immediately, I recognized that it was, in great part, my fault. It was my wake-up call.

Looking back 20 years to that distressing experience, I can clearly identify God's leading hand in our story. He wanted to give us a happy and fulfilled family life as well as the ability to help other couples struggling with similar challenges. My stubborn pursuit of pastoral perfection so often frustrated what God wanted to do through us. Here are some lessons I learned.

1. Have the right priorities

Have you ever felt trapped in the crossfire of conflicting expectations? God called you to be a pastor. And

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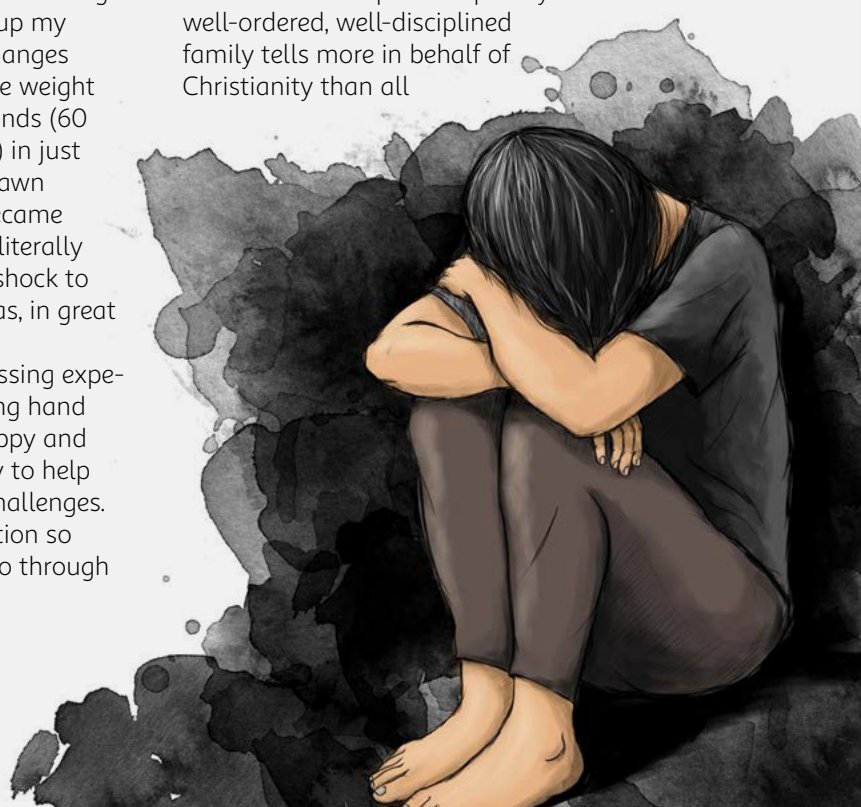


SCAN FOR AUDIO

at the same time, He gave you your marriage and family, making you the custodian of their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. While you received these two distinct gifts from God, there have been times when you have felt these gifts working in opposition to each other. Prioritizing one of the gifts often makes it feel like one is neglecting the other. I know it should not be like this, but I have found this to be, in many instances, the reality of my life.

The truth is that God does not play games with us.¹ He would never give us a gift to be destroyed by another gift that also came from Him. If there is a conflict between the gifts, it is because we have misunderstood something.

After our crisis, many years ago, we made an important decision. Our family came first, and the church—our work—second. Truly, a strong and healthy marriage and family provides us with the strength and authenticity needed to be able to work for others. On that point, Ellen G. White shares quite eloquently: “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all



the sermons that can be preached.”² It is true: this decision has sometimes made our lives difficult. On several occasions, I had to say no to certain requests made of me in ministry. Nevertheless, I am truly thankful that my leaders have always understood my intentions, and God has never ceased to open new doors for me.

2. Set aside family time

I remember one Sunday morning sitting down to breakfast and my phone rang. My first instinct was to take the call, but then I remembered my decision to put family first. I continued eating with my wife and son. I can still see the surprised expression on Viktor’s face. “Daddy, your phone is ringing,” he said. “Don’t you plan to answer it?”

“I am having breakfast with the most important people in the world,” I declared. “What could be more important than that?” I have not always felt proud—but I felt proud that day.

It was the beginning of a new era for me. Slowly, my church members learned not to call me with unimportant issues during protected family time. For me, that meant Sundays or late in the evenings. Indeed, a new level of understanding has developed between my parishioners and me as they have grown to respect and value my family time. At the same time, I have cultivated an understanding that if a church member does call on Sunday or late in the evening, the matter must be of great importance, and I immediately make myself available.

Just as we write visitation appointments in our calendars or note that the business meeting will be on Thursday evening, we need to protect our family time. We should also set aside time without the children to nurture our marriage. Kyle Benson of the Gottman Institute, founded by celebrated marriage researcher John Gottman, noted that one of the significant differences between high-quality

marriages and low-quality marriages is the six hours per week that good couples spend together in small proportions every day.³

3. Accept your vulnerability and ask for help

I have heard it said so many times in counseling: “I am an Adventist pastor. Please don’t ask me to tell you my name, because if it comes out that I have problems, I will lose my job. Can you just listen to my story and help me?”

It is so dangerous to get trapped in this kind of situation. If you live under the pressure of making everything perfect, being an invulnerable leader who is never ill, never exhausted, never burned out, always full of fresh sermon ideas, always at the top of his or her journey with God, you condemn yourself to hypocrisy. What if things do not go so well? What if your spouse complains more and more about some unresolved conflict you have swept under the carpet? What if your teenage son starts smoking? What if your daughter dates a non-Adventist guy and church members see them kissing on the street? What if you feel empty on a Friday evening and have no idea what you will preach about the following morning?

Does our church culture allow a pastor to admit shortcomings and ask for professional help? Is local church leadership ready to invest in one of the most precious resources of our church—our pastors? In some places, yes, but there are still places where this subject is avoided.

Getting support from the church is only a part of the issue. The other side of the coin is the pastor’s ability to ask for professional help without being embarrassed or covered by shame and isolation. *Am I worthy of my calling if it comes out that I am only human?* Having personal problems in the area of marriage, family, mental, or emotional health is never a single problem. These problems are sometimes connected to spiritual struggles and/or existential fears. Will the church continue to employ me if I have problems? In my family, there was a long journey to full recovery for both my wife and me. But through this process, we have learned so many new insights about God and ourselves that no theological institution could have taught us. By asking for professional help, I realized how many possibilities are available for people in need. I got access to new tools that I can use in my own ministry—which inspired me to study the working tools of other helping professions in addition to what I have learned in pastoral counseling.

**SHE CRIED INCESSANTLY
AND BECAME UNABLE TO
CARE FOR OUR SON AND
HOME. I LITERALLY SAW LIFE
LEAVING HER BODY.**

4. Have a support group

It is very hard to wear the hat of a spiritual superhero. But we often find ourselves in the midst of incredibly unrealistic expectations. The people we lead long for a strong and balanced leader. The issue becomes compounded because we can't admit when we fall short. We have experienced how dangerous it can be to express our doubts and fears, to open up areas of our lives that can easily be turned against us when it comes to election time.

I remember my disappointment when, in conversation with my conference president just before my ordination, I heard repeated back to me my inner struggles that I had shared with a church member whom I considered a friend. Is there a safe space where pastors can open up? I admit, it is definitely not easy to find that space, but if you do not have this haven, you are a certain candidate for depression.

I took a general survey at a pastors meeting about what they did on a Saturday night after a busy Sabbath. I was shocked. Six out of 10 pastors did not want to see or talk to anyone. All they wanted to do was to sit and watch a television program. This is how they processed their suppressed emotions because there was no safe person they could talk to about their concerns.

So, where can a pastor be vulnerable? For me, hanging out with two fellow pastors—twice a year—on a three-day trip. We call it burnout prevention training. We reserve a hotel room somewhere, talk until late, drive go-carts, go bowling, or hiking, then talk again. Yes, it costs money and time from family and ministry. It also takes some organizing—but it is worth the effort. By becoming a calmer, more balanced person, I have become a better husband, a better father, and a better pastor too.

5. Protect the boundaries of your marriage

We are reminded in the *Minister's Handbook* that, as pastors, we occupy positions that may make us the objects of thoughts, emotions, and even the sexual desires of some members, with no deliberate intent on our part.⁴ These thoughts are often connected to the influence and public regard given to our status, as well as to the attention, kindness, and interest we show to people as part of our job description.

It can easily happen that during a one-hour pastoral conversation, someone can receive more attention from us than she or he has received from

their parents and/or spouse during the past few years. The most painful pastoral counseling and couples therapy sessions I have experienced as a therapist have been cases where a pastor was involved in infidelity. To prevent this from happening, we need to set very clear rules for ourselves in order to mark and guard the boundaries of our marriage.

For me, it is important to show up with my wife at speaking engagements, even if we have to pay for her expenses. My preference has been to travel with my wife for international speaking assignments rather than to travel alone. If there is a lady coming by herself to my counseling practice, I make sure we are not the only ones in the building. I often ask the person cleaning the office to find something to do in the room next door during the counseling session, or I leave the office door slightly ajar.

I also plan my work so that I never have to travel in my car alone with a woman who is not my wife. While the book of Proverbs speaks repeatedly about external dangers, the apostle Paul speaks extensively about internal dangers. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Rom. 7:15, NIV). Since the danger is real, the protective measures need to be real too.

Two gifts

Is it possible to have a happy and satisfying marriage as a pastor? I truly believe it is. By intentional, ongoing attention and some bold decisions, your marriage can be your strongest resource.⁵

Yes, God has given many of us two great gifts: a family and a pastoral ministry. I have learned—sometimes (unfortunately) the hard way—that these gifts can enhance, rather than destroy, each other.



1 See Gábor Mihalec and Róbert Csizmadó, *No More Games: How to Build a Faithful and Satisfying Relationship* (Grantham, UK: Autumn House, 2018).

2 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 32.

3 Kyle Benson, "6 Hours a Week to a Better Relationship," The Gottman Institute, December 9, 2016, gottman.com/blog/6-hours-a-week-to-a-better-relationship/.

4 See "Ethics and Sex" in *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1997), 50, 51; see also John A. Trusty, *Why Some Pastors Cheat . . . And What Can Be Done to Help Them to Be True* (Gaithersburg, MD: Signature Books, 2010).

5 See Gábor Mihalec, *I Do: How to Build a Great Marriage* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2014).



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A centennial family ministries celebration:

An interview with Ron and Karen Flowers

Willie Oliver (WO): The year 2019 is a very special year for the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in general and family ministries in particular. It marks a hundred years since the General Conference Committee created the Home Commission on October 8, 1919, the beginnings of a structured ministry to families in our church, pioneered by pastors and educators.

Elaine Oliver (EO): One of the extraordinary highlights of our centennial celebration of Family Ministries is the exceptional opportunity to have a conversation with Karen and Ron Flowers, the former directors of Family Ministries for the world church. Karen and Ron have experienced quite a bit of the history of this ministry.

WO: Welcome, Karen and Ron. Please share with us why, after thirty-four years of Parent and Home secretaries serving families in the church via the department of education, the decision was made to design a different arrangement for this ministry.

Karen Flowers (KF): Robert Pierson, then president of the General Conference, had a real heart for families. It happens that his executive secretary was Betty Holbrook. In a discussion that occurred in a committee meeting where she was taking minutes, Elder Pierson expressed his growing concern for the well-being of Adventist families. Betty was definitely a kindred spirit. That night at home, she sat down and drafted for her

boss the broad strokes of what was eventually to become Home and Family Service, a ministry with a comprehensive focus on marriage, parenting, and building relational skills necessary for living in close relationships.

Ron Flowers (RF): Betty's husband, Del, an educator, loved to recount the events to follow. Not many nights later, he and Betty were at home when there was a knock at the door. On the other side were Elder Pierson and Elder Neal Wilson, then president of the North American Division. Del would later chuckle at his immediate response: he thought somebody had died! Del and Betty listened with keen interest as they came right to the point. "We like Betty's proposal, and we would like you both to lead this new ministry to families."

EO: That outstanding story demonstrates the long-standing commitment to families in the SDA Church. So, you joined Home and Family Service a few years after it was put in place. I remember the first seminar I attended where you were speaking. It really changed my life. You were authentic and transparent, without sharing more information than is necessary to remain relevant and real. We've tried to model that in Family Ministries for many years. What was it that moved you to present yourselves as less than perfect?

KF: It happened at Michigan Camp Meeting. We presented what we understood to be the best of

ideals. We told our best stories. We gave it our all. A young woman came up to me at the close of our seminar series and told me how blessed she had been. We chatted a bit, and as her children pulled her toward lunch, she wistfully tossed over her shoulder, "I wish I had a husband like Ron."

RF: How well I remember! I was off to the side and heard this. I held my breath, waiting to see what Karen might say and thinking all the while, *Ahh, if the woman really knew!* God knows we certainly were not in this place giving lectures on family because we had our act all together! Like many, we at first resisted the call to this ministry, feeling sorely inadequate.

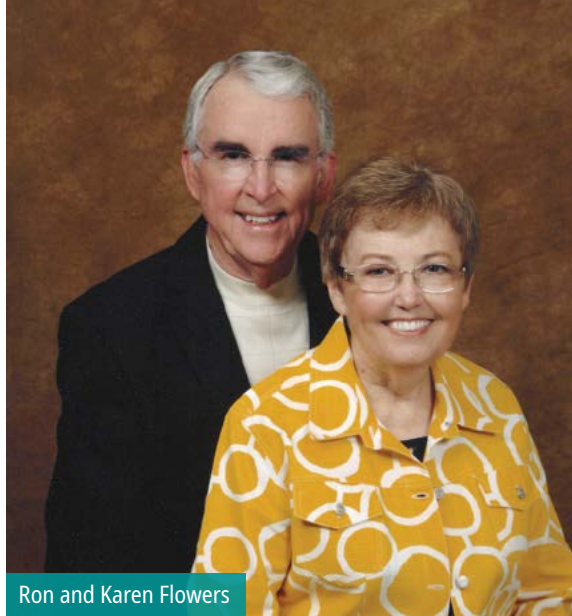
Backing up a bit, I had been pastoring the Capital Memorial Church in downtown Washington, DC. Out of our own felt need for our marriage and parenting our boys effectively, as well as our work with the families of the church, we had joined the Metro Washington Family Life Council. It was a local think tank made up of interested local couples that Del and Betty used as a kind of laboratory for some of their ideas during the first five years of Home and Family Service back in 1975.

WO: Yes, 1975 to 1980. Those must have been exciting and challenging times all at once.

RF: One thing they said rang in our ears: "If you want to help families, you will need to open up your lives so others can see family life in action." People want "real." But "real" required genuineness and an appropriate level of vulnerability that, at first, made us feel exposed and uncomfortable. We didn't immediately grasp how fundamental authenticity would be until we had some hard experiences. How we wish now we could have sent that young woman in Michigan home with courage and hope and skills to grow her marriage rather than the melancholy wish that she had married better.

EO: That had to be pretty scary because I remember the first time Willie said that to me. He had returned from another training event you were conducting and said: "You know, we need to be more transparent during our presentations." And I was thinking, *What does that mean?*

KF: The stories of living intimately together in family are fresh every day, for sure. They probably need some seasoning before they are shared,



Ron and Karen Flowers

making sure there's a resolution in sight and everyone involved feels comfortable with the sharing.

WO: Indeed! You mentioned Del and Betty Holbrook, the couple who were elected leaders in Vienna, Austria, during the 1975 General Conference Session. Can you tell us a little more about your experience with them?

KF: Del was a visionary. As an educator, he was way ahead of us on the importance of curricular development for Family Ministries. I remember the day he took Ron and me to the General Conference warehouse. The area assigned to Home and Family Service was filled with huge boxes, which he proudly opened one by one. Inside were thick, red, three-ring binders with topics important to family living already emblazoned in gold on the covers—topics like conflict, communication, handling anger, family finance, et cetera. Five hundred notebooks for each topic! After putting his full set on display, he announced emphatically, "Your job is to fill these."

EO: How insightful, but ominous and just a little daunting.

RF: The red notebooks were an interesting aspect of those first few years. Our work on the red notebooks started before we knew there were red notebooks, really! Del had proposed a resource for pastors on premarital guidance in the Metro Washington Family Life Council. There was a need since so many newly married couples were having a difficult time adjusting to married life due to not knowing what to expect in marriage before taking such a huge step. I

called him up one day and said I'd be interested in working on that as a local pastor. He called me back later and said, "Great! Oh, and you will chair the group!" So, a small subgroup of the council put together that first resource, *Marriage Education* (later revised and updated as *Preparing for Marriage*). It was one of the first premarital resources for pastors on the market anywhere.

EO: You'll be happy to know that we still have two of those big, red notebooks in our office. It was the first thing that I took out of the archives when we first came to the Family Ministries office at world headquarters.

WO: The early resources you developed through the Metro Washington Family Life Council were among the most important materials I used when I first became a director of Family Ministries, thirty years ago, for the Greater New York Conference.

Can you tell us about Doctors John and Millie Youngberg and the early days of Family Life International, a conference discussing relevant family issues held on the campus of Andrews University?

RF: While still pastoring, we had felt a need to help married couples with the incredible challenges they were facing in marriage and organized a number of family life seminars in our local churches. It never occurred to us that we could lead such ourselves, so we invited guest speakers. Then, in 1976 (its second year), we heard about this Family Life Workshop that was being offered at Andrews University.

KF: I read about it first, and I said to Ron, "Let's sign up for this." Ron looked at the brochure a bit skeptically and said, "I don't think so! What are they going to do there anyway?"

RF: Eventually, she persuaded me to attend the event, but we signed up for a parenting workshop that seemed safe enough. We had a good experience. The following year, Karen signed us up for marriage enrichment before she asked. John and Millie Youngberg and Ed and Letah Banks were real pioneers in this area. For us, and many like us who are well-known leaders in this ministry today, these marriage weekends were life-changing events.

WO: What I clearly remember about attending Family Life International is that it was a source of

distinct inspiration for me. I attended during the last ten years the Youngbergs coordinated this event. I began attending during my early years as a conference Family Ministries director. It truly is outstanding that for twenty-four uninterrupted years—since the summer of 1975—John and Millie Youngberg ran this event on the campus of Andrews University, which continues today as the Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice.

RF: State of the art. If you wanted to learn what state of the art was in Family Ministries, you went there.

KF: Their motto was "We happily share," and for those of us who were looking for resources, we found them there. This is the spirit that has permeated Family Ministries from the beginning and that will carry it into the future as long as time lasts.

WO: What I distinctly remember was the outstanding passion and commitment John and Millie modeled about the importance of developing stronger and healthier marriages and families for the church around the world, to help us be ready for the coming of the Lord. Thank you, Karen and Ron, for memorializing these moments with us. It's been wonderful walking down memory lane and reminiscing on how God led you and other leaders to make this into something that has made a difference in the lives of people the world over.

EO: God has really smiled on Family Ministries, and we continue to experience growth. Today we are blessed to have Family Ministries leaders who serve at every level of the SDA Church, from the local church to each of our thirteen world divisions around the globe. All our division directors of Family Ministries are veteran ministry leaders and professionals who have been intimately involved in pastoral ministry and leadership. They each bring up-close experience as family life educators and advocates for stronger and healthier marriages and families, as well as relationships of every kind in the local church. Again, thank you, Karen and Ron, for your many years of serving the global church in this important area of ministry that is so very crucial to the well-being and viability of our church. When we have strong families in the church, we are more likely to have a church strong in the mission of helping people get ready for the coming of the Lord. 🙏



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TEAM MINISTRY

A blessing to families

Pastoring is a wonderful vocation. As pastors, we embrace the gifts and talents God has given us and use them every day on behalf of His people and to His glory. Yet, pastoral ministry can be demanding, frustrating, and even discouraging. We have long contended with the challenges and expectations of ministry. The cries of pastoral families for encouragement, recognition, and support are heard all around the world. In our thirty-five years of ministry, we have met and tackled our fair share of challenges. Our dedication to serve the church has seen us, at times, overlook our other callings as spouses and parents.

We know all too well how marriages can struggle and family relationships suffer. We have seen how children can grow up resenting the church as a result of the pressure of pastoral ministry. But we have also discovered that it does not have to be that way. There is hope! With a firm determination, unwavering commitment, and the guidance of the Spirit of God, pastoral families can claim victory over the many difficulties that challenge their ministry. The One who called us will sustain us through every trial.

A scenario: “I am a pastor. My wife is a specialized medical doctor. She has a well-paying job that she loves. The conference wants to move us. My wife found out that there is no hospital with her specialty in this new area. She said she has her calling and I have mine. What do I do?”

We have seen over the years that this is a regular scenario. Pastors work better and more

effectively when they and their spouse are united in their calling, affirm one another, and work together as a team. But what does team ministry really mean?

For some, team ministry means husband and wife co-pastoring or in joint ministries in the church. But there are couples where each spouse has a different church ministry. Or a pastor may have a spouse who has a separate career. Or one spouse is a pastor, and the other is a homemaker. Can they all still practice team ministry?

We would like to suggest that, even within the wide panorama of varying ministerial scenarios, pastoral couples can still be in team ministry.¹

Strength in partnership

Raquel: I have come to identify aspects of my own calling that are integral to a ministry team.

1. I am called to fellowship with God. The God who called me demands that my primary relationship is with Him. This principle is fundamental to every other relationship I have—my relationship with myself, my faith journey, and my choices; my relationship with the mate He gave me and the children we have together; and my relationship with the community of believers with whom I worship, witness, serve, and share my faith. In short, my foremost calling is about relationships.

2. I am called to support my spouse. An essential part of my marital commitment is to create an atmosphere of love, peace, and contentment in our relationship—not only to minister to

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

my husband's needs but also to assist and protect him. Within this sacred duty, I become a comforter, an encourager, a counselor, and his best friend. Ellen G. White reminds us, "God has assigned woman [and, even more so, the pastor's wife] her mission; and if she, in her humble way, yet to the best of her ability, makes a heaven of her home, faithfully and lovingly performing her duties to her husband and children, continually seeking to let a holy light shine from her useful, pure, and virtuous life to brighten all around her, she is doing the work left her of the Master."²

3. I am called to care for my children. At one point in our ministry, I was at home with the children. We still strove to be in team ministry. How did we do that? I prayed for my husband's work. I supported his ministry at church. But for us, team ministry was more than that. It was recognizing that I, too, had to be involved in ministry. I took seriously the counsel given to mothers: "Her work in the education of the children is in every respect as elevating and ennobling as any post of duty he may be called to fill, even if it is to be the chief magistrate of the nation."³ I have a binding commitment to my beloved ones. Ensuring their physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual development is the most admirable ministry God has entrusted to me. It is a ministry priority that God has asked me to handle faithfully.

4. I am called to minister in my church. Paul admonishes, "Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith" (Gal. 6:10, *The Message*). Team ministry did not mean I had to volunteer for everything. It did not mean that I had to accept every position that was offered to me. Neither did it mean I had to have at least one position in the church. While I got involved in the church, according to the spiritual gifts with which God has blessed me, I recognized that I had a position that no one else had. It is a full-time, twenty-four-hour-a-day, always-on-call position. It's called a pastor's spouse.

5. I am called to pursue my own calling. God made me a unique individual. I am not called to

fill anyone else's shoes. Jesus says to me, "Don't hide your light! Let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:15, 16, TLB). My career calling may be different from that of my spouse, but it is not less significant.

Benefits to the partnership

Jonas: At one point in our ministry, while I was a local church pastor, my wife worked in the corporate world. We had two separate career paths—but we had one united ministry. That did not mean that she had to make pastoral visits with me or that she had to be a Bible worker in the church. Instead, I sought to affirm her in her calling, she worked to support me, and she prayed for God to create opportunities for her to be a witness at work. For us, that is team ministry.

We know from experience that it may take time and effort, even trial and error, for pastoral couples to negotiate what team ministry means for them—but it is worth it. By seeking to better understand our individual roles, clarifying our personal callings, and learning to serve God according to our gifts, our ministry together was strengthened.

When we commit our best to each other, for the good of the church, the benefits to our partnership are numerous. Two of the most significant benefits of our shared ministry are spiritual growth and a strong friendship.

Spiritual growth. A ministerial team has immense potential to grow together spiritually, both as individuals and as a couple. The couple who prays and studies the Word together will certainly stand together through good times and bad. By seeking His will day by day, they will discover the certainty of His guiding strength. As it was promised long ago, "the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27, NKJV).

It is not just the pastor who needs this strength and refuge but the entire family. The pastor's spouse needs the guidance that only God can provide, and our children should be encouraged to form a closer walk with God. Church demands

and family expectations weigh heavily on the heart of the pastor; both roles depend upon God's strength and can be fulfilled rightly only by leaning on Him at all times.

Strong friendship. We have discovered that as we minister together, we become closer to each other, not only as spouses but also as friends. We were great friends before our wedding, but we are better friends now. I have come to understand that my spouse is the one person I can always and truly depend on. But it is not just inwardly focused. I believe the church is blessed by seeing a pastoral couple laughing together, embracing, and even crying together as they share their victories and failures. It can be a positive witness to the power of a godly marriage.

Benefits to the pastoral family

While a life of ministry comes with many unique challenges, it also presents many unique opportunities. Although others in team ministry may not weave their family life into the life of their congregation, we have chosen to do so. One of the greatest blessings we have found in ministry has been the privilege of seeing God at work firsthand, moving in peoples' lives and hearts in ways most people never get to see. Involving our children in our ministry has made these blessings real for them too. Some of these blessings are listed:

1. *The opportunity to meet people.* Pastoral families are always surrounded by a big spiritual family as a result of their ministry. Our children get to know people they might not otherwise have met, including good, godly, and wise believers who relate to their young lives while witnessing to the truth. These friendships make ministerial life more enjoyable.

2. *The privilege of leading people to Christ.* It is a blessing to witness how God works through evangelism and Bible studies, to see firsthand the transformation of lives when people accept Jesus as their personal Savior. "It was the joy of Christ to save souls. Let this be your work and your joy."⁴

3. *Participation in historical moments of the members' lives.* The pastor is uniquely privileged to be part of church members' lives on special occasions. We are included in good moments, such as birthdays, graduations, and weddings and also during tragic events, such as funerals and family crises. Through them all, we have the opportunity to provide comfort, encouragement, and counsel.

4. *Influencing people.* Pastors have a great impact on the lives of members through

leadership and example. Through our words and attitudes, we express joy in serving those around us, offering a strong spiritual influence through preaching and counseling.

5. *Visiting church members.* There is a great joy when pastors visit church members. It is an incarnational ministry, a ministry of love, in which we find the real meaning of pastoral work. Effective pastoral visitation gives the pastor a sense of accomplishment. Every pastor has strengths and growth areas, and visitation is the strength of our ministry. On some days, visiting is a joyful adventure; on other days, it can be difficult. But ministry cannot exist without it.

6. *Recognition and appreciation.* Church members are always at the church door after service expressing words of appreciation to the pastor. The pastoral family is blessed by these expressions of recognition for their ministry and spiritual work. Also, pastors often receive tokens and gifts from members on special occasions, which demonstrate the church's appreciation for their spiritual leaders.

7. *Visiting many places.* Working for the church gives pastors and pastoral families opportunities to see new places, such as attending pastoral retreats, traveling for special events, or even transferring to a new church.

8. *Security and stability.* Churches give pastors financial stability. They receive a monthly salary, and often health and life insurance, financial support to educate their children, retirement provision, and other benefits. Financial stability can help ease stress to face the future with confidence and joy.

9. *Continuing education.* In many places, the church offers continuing education programs that help pastoral couples grow both professionally and spiritually.

The struggle

For many pastors and spouses, the blessings of their position seem to be few and far between. We sometimes get discouraged and struggle in our role. In team ministry, we gain insight, wisdom, and support from each other because our individual personalities, experiences, and perspectives are unique. When you are feeling unprepared to measure up to the expectations placed upon you or fatigued from the relentless demands of ministry, remember this: you are a chosen vessel for such a time as this, for such a task as this. Trust God, who has given you the privilege and honor to serve.

Struggles are inherent to a life committed to ministry. We must be aware of and heed the apostle Peter's warning that the enemy is lurking (1 Pet. 5:8), waiting patiently for the opportunity to destroy us. But God wants us to succeed. Being sensitive to His voice and connecting to His Word daily will provide a safe path. As partners in team ministry, we are to be wise, aware, and alert; on the lookout for each other; and pressing forward in our ministry without any distraction or deviation. When we wholeheartedly accept what God has in store for us—individually and as a family—we each will fulfill our assigned role, ministering together for God's glory and family unity.

We can attest to the fact that the eternal reward of being a pastoral family far surpasses any frustration we will ever feel in ministry. We are convinced that the life of a pastoral couple called to ministry is the best there is. The rewards are numerous: we feel loved, appreciated, needed, trusted, and admired—all as a result of our faithful commitment to the One who called us. We become instruments that God uses to promote the spiritual progress of His people—a channel through which the grace of God, the love

of Christ, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit can flow to others.

Enjoy your shared ministerial life and make it a success! Remember: the calling of God is irrevocable unless you choose to walk away from it. But if you have made your calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10), you both will enjoy the ministry for life. John Calvin said, "It is my happiness that I have served Him who never fails to reward His servants to the full extent of His promise."⁵ Stand together. With Christ as your foundation and the center of your marriage and mission, you will neither stumble nor be shaken.



- 1 For more extensive information on this topic, see Jonas and Raquel Arrais, *Jays and Challenges of the Pastoral Family* (Madrid, Spain: Editorial Safeliz, 2018).
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 2:465.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 231.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1925), 110.
- 5 John MacArthur, *Matthew 8–15*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1987), 235.

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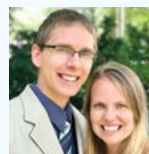
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2019 Emphasis: **Church Revitalization**

JARED MILLER, DMin, pastors the Middle East University Church and the Bouchrieh Seventh-day Adventist Church in Beirut, Lebanon.
KATIE MILLER, MA, is a homemaker and adjunct instructor at Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

Clinging to Jesus in a *foreign* Land

Our initial desire to serve the Lord in a foreign land took place during our seminary studies at Andrews University about 10 years ago. We thought the timing was perfect. We did not have any kids yet, allowing both of us to work full time in mission service. The Lord seemed to be opening all the doors for us. But after receiving one solitary phone call, the doors were slammed shut. Our dream of mission service was dashed to pieces. We were extremely disappointed.

The Lord began resurrecting that dream six years later. We attended the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, and Homer Trecartin, at that time president of the Middle East North Africa (MENA) Union Mission, gave a compelling and convicting report of the vast unreached area in MENA.¹ Later that same year, we took some youth from our district to the Generation of Youth for Christ conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Homer Trecartin spoke again. He said the harvest was plentiful, as Jesus said, but the workers were few—especially in MENA.² He made an altar call, inviting young people to come forward and serve God as missionaries, even if it meant they may die in the mission field, never returning home to their families again. Many young people went forward, but we stayed in our seats. Later, when we talked, Katie said she felt that God was calling us to work in the Middle East. Jared did not see any possibility of that happening.

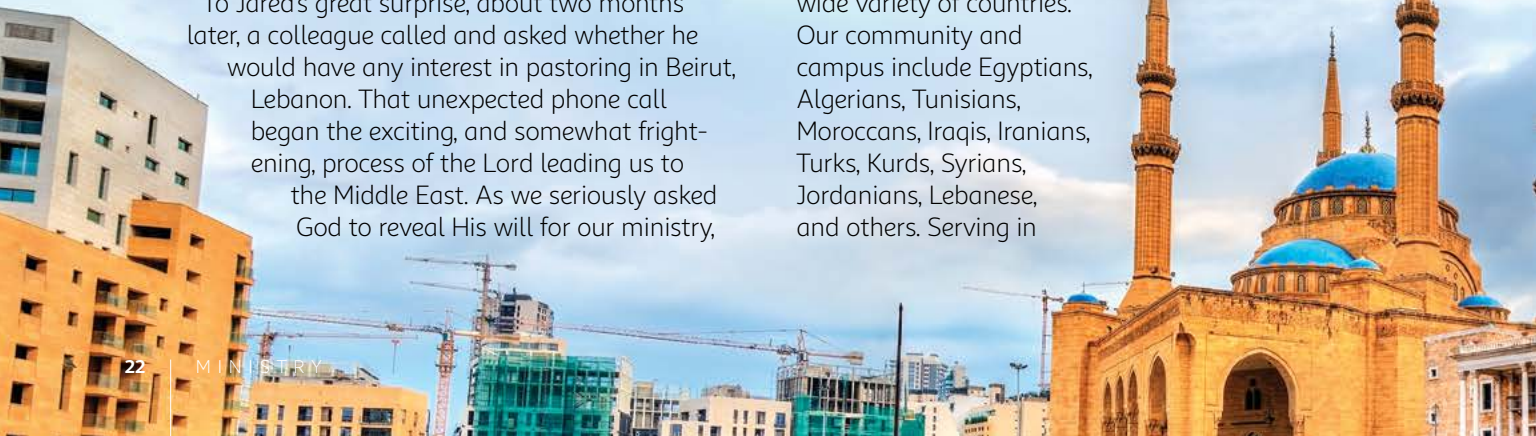
To Jared's great surprise, about two months later, a colleague called and asked whether he would have any interest in pastoring in Beirut, Lebanon. That unexpected phone call began the exciting, and somewhat frightening, process of the Lord leading us to the Middle East. As we seriously asked God to reveal His will for our ministry,

He quickly opened the doors and made His will known. When our house sold after being listed for just three weeks and Jared's doctoral program allowed him to continue his project implementation as previously planned, despite our potential move, we knew He was calling us overseas.

It was during this time that we read this statement: "If the followers of Christ were awake to duty, there would be thousands where there is one today proclaiming the gospel in heathen lands. And all who could not personally engage in the work, would yet sustain it with their means, their sympathy, and their prayers. And there would be far more earnest labor for souls in Christian countries."³ God convicted us that we needed to leave our district, our family ministries departmental role, and our comfortable life in the United States (US), in order to share the gospel in a foreign land—Lebanon.

Adjusting to new people and a new culture

By moving to Lebanon, we entered the richness of Middle Eastern culture. We live and serve at Middle East University (MEU), and the MENA Union headquarters is literally next door to the university. These two places are the hub of Adventism in the Middle East. We encounter missionaries from all over the world and, beyond that, we meet people from a wide variety of countries. Our community and campus include Egyptians, Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans, Iraqis, Iranians, Turks, Kurds, Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese, and others. Serving in



a foreign land has allowed our whole family to build relationships with people from outside of our culture.

In such a multicultural environment, we have sincerely tried to be humble, teachable, and adaptable. We have attempted to understand and respect the Middle Eastern culture. At the same time, we strive to teach that biblical principles must take precedence over culture—including our own. Sometimes we wrestle to determine whether an issue belongs to the cultural realm or the scriptural realm. As a family, we realize our need of wisdom from Heaven to know what is essential (spiritually speaking) and what is not, and we realize that we need the power provided by the indwelling Spirit to firmly model scriptural faithfulness in all areas of life.

Family life in a foreign land

Our family has experienced blessings and difficulties in mission service. Some of the challenges we have faced are similar to challenges faced by pastoral families who live in their home country, while other challenges are unique to living in a foreign land.

When we arrived in Lebanon, Katie was 19 weeks pregnant. The search began for a hospital and doctor willing to allow us to have a water birth. Once a week, on Jared's day off, we would borrow another missionary's vehicle in order to search for the right hospital. However, at 29 weeks we were still searching. In desperation, Katie prayed, "Jesus, let me find someplace this week that will allow water birth. If we cannot find a place that allows that, help me accept it." Soon thereafter, a kind nurse referred us to a hospital that did water births. A few months later, our daughter was born there in a birthing pool. It may appear to be a small thing to some, but Katie is truly thankful to serve a God that listens to, and answers, the prayers of His children.

Adjusting to life overseas after our baby was born was a blessing but was nonetheless challenging. Some challenges moved from manageable to overwhelming, simply by virtue of being away from home.

Two weeks after Eva was born, Katie's mom traveled to the Middle East to see

her newest granddaughter, leaving the US for the first time. The older girls were enjoying a wonderful time with Grandma when we received word that Katie's grandfather had a heart attack. He passed away and mom's planned two-week stay with us ended half-completed. Our shock and devastation extended beyond the bereavement. "God, why did this happen," we cried, "at this time, cutting short mom's trip when we needed her help with the baby?"

Eva was about three weeks old. We did not have her passport yet. That meant we could not fly to the US for the funeral. For us, being missionaries in a foreign land has meant missing some family funerals. This has been difficult for us and also for our extended family, some of whom do not understand why we left the US to serve in the Middle East. During painful experiences like these, when our questions have not been answered, we have chosen to cling to Jesus.

Grounded in Jesus

Life seemed to settle down a little with our third child at home. Homeschooling returned to high-priority status. We had the essential tools, good curriculum and books, but now we had to get the new baby on a regular schedule. We asked the Lord to help us, and He has. We know how much grace He has shown us, and He has impressed us to give grace to our daughters and patiently teach them. Additionally, we are also extremely thankful for the strong Adventist environment our children are growing up in at MEU. There are many young families, missionaries and locals, and therefore our daughters have many more Christian friends in Lebanon than they did in the US.

One day, Katie was walking back and forth on a spiritual retreat in the



Lebanon Mountains. She was between the mouth of the cave, where the early Christians would hide and worship, and the end of the hallway with the high glass wall overlooking the mountains. Praying as she walked, Katie listened to hear what God wanted to say to her. She sensed Jesus asking whether she would still love and follow Him even if He turned her world upside down.

As she wondered what that meant, Katie stopped walking and spotted a tree growing upside down on one of the nearby cliffs. At times in the mission field, she felt just like that tree, hanging upside down. But God showed her during that walk that just as the tree had good roots embedded into the mountainside, she has good roots grounded in Jesus. He assured her that He will not let her fall.

Our family is by no means perfect, but we are grounded in Jesus and His Word. When families are grounded in Jesus, they can go anywhere He leads without fear of falling. He carried and empowered us as a pastoral family in the US, and He has done the same for us as a pastoral family in a foreign land.

Sacrifices

Living overseas has meant we have missed Thanksgiving and Christmas with extended family in the US for the last three years. While technology has made communication easier, and video chatting allows us to see our families while we talk, that is still not the same as sitting down with them for Thanksgiving Dinner. At times we and our daughters have felt homesick. During these times, we have tried to cling to each other and God.

Moving overseas has also meant making a substantial financial sacrifice. Life in Lebanon is expensive. The used car we bought for our growing family cost twice as much as it would have cost in America, with an income significantly lower than our previous income. We have been faithful in returning tithe and offerings, but we have had to live on a tight budget, dip into our savings, and forfeit thousands of dollars in retirement contributions. We still believe that God has been faithful. We still believe He has opened the windows of heaven. We still believe He has poured out blessings upon us.⁴

Strong families, strong ministry

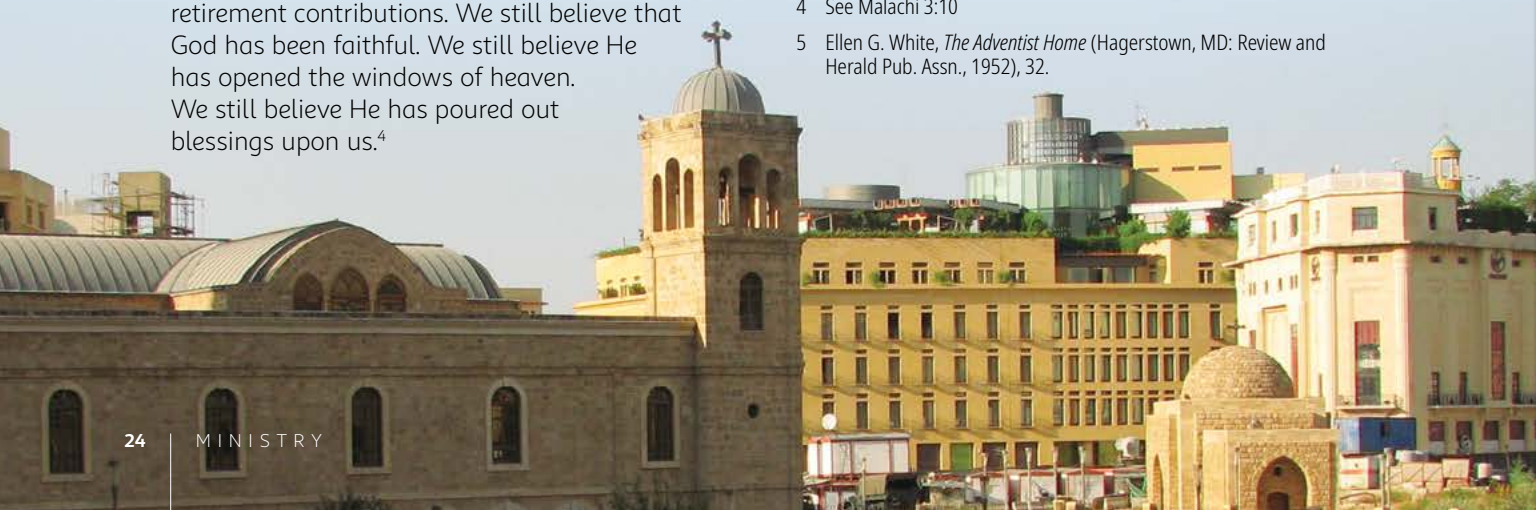
We have tried to prioritize our marriage and family while in this foreign mission field. When church leadership provided a marriage retreat for the workers in our region, we took advantage of the opportunity to strengthen our own marriage. In the mission field, our priorities are the same as they were in the US: a personal relationship with God first, our marriage and children second, and ministry third. We understand this is easier said than done, but even with young children at home, we have been able to minister together as a family.

We have opened our home for Friday night vespers, we have gone visiting people as a whole family, and we have engaged in door-to-door witnessing together (yes, that is safe and permitted in Lebanon). Oftentimes, Jared will bring one of our older girls with him when he is studying the Bible with someone. Last March, we had a major prophecy series taking place with Pastor John Bradshaw from *It Is Written*. While Jared was coordinating the adult meeting, Katie worked in the childcare department taking care of infants and toddlers so their parents could focus on the messages being shared.

We believe if our family is strong, our ministry will be stronger. As Ellen White wrote, “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.”⁵ The psalmist asked the question, “How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” (Ps. 137:4, ESV). As a family, clinging to Jesus in a foreign land has been one of the greatest highlights of our ministry. The sacrifices have been worth it. God has abundantly blessed the work in Lebanon—and us. We are deeply thankful for His leading.



- 1 The population of Lebanon is over 6 million, with approximately 4,000 Seventh-day Adventists.
- 2 See Matthew 9:37.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892), 81.
- 4 See Malachi 3:10
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 32.





Joys and Challenges of the Pastoral Family

by Jonas and Raquel Arrais, Madrid, Spain:
Editorial Safeliz, 2018.

Writing about pastoral families comes with its challenges. While it is important to outline the joys, opportunities, and privileges that are a part of being a pastoral family, it is equally important to be truthful about the challenges, even the crises, that pastoral families face. It is refreshing to see a couple in ministry willing to tackle these issues.

This book is written in a clear and open style with broad and effective use of the Bible and substantial reliance on counsel from the writings of Ellen G. White. The authors are efficient in their description of and prescription for the issues surrounding the pastoral family. Much can be gleaned from even a cursory reading of the book, although I would, of course, recommend a thorough reading.

There are points that the reader may disagree with, but the book is informative, well organized, and comprehensive. It successfully uses a dialogue-type format on occasion to give the reader the opportunity to “hear” the individual “voice” of each author.

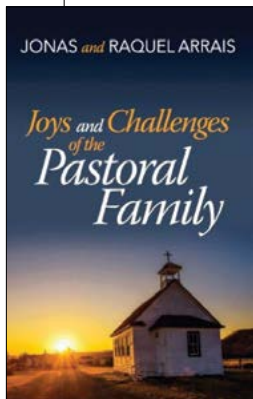
A substantial majority of pastors are married. The authors, at the beginning of the book, rightly emphasize the centrality of a healthy marital relationship as a foundation for effective ministry in the church. The authors offer clear biblical material in support of their assertions in this area. The chapter titled “If You Want to Marry a Pastor” is sobering and full of clear, simple, and at times challenging counsel.

In general, the book is oriented toward a traditional pastoral family arrangement where the pastor is male, married, and has children, and the primary role of the pastor’s wife is to support her husband’s role in the church. The authors freely refer to the “pastor’s wife” while only briefly acknowledging the notion of a pastor’s husband. We are all aware of pastors whose spouses are professionals who have considerable responsibility and influence in the communities in which they serve. The book would have benefited from paying more attention to other kinds of pastoral family arrangements. There are divorced pastors with families, single-parent pastors, and blended pastoral families. The traditional pastoral family is still the profile of the majority of pastoral families, but it is far from being the only profile.

The book could be strengthened by reference to research when it comes to pastoral families. Are there any trends within pastoral families that denominational administration needs to take note of? What impact do pastoral tenure, Christian education, technology, and other factors have on the pastoral family?

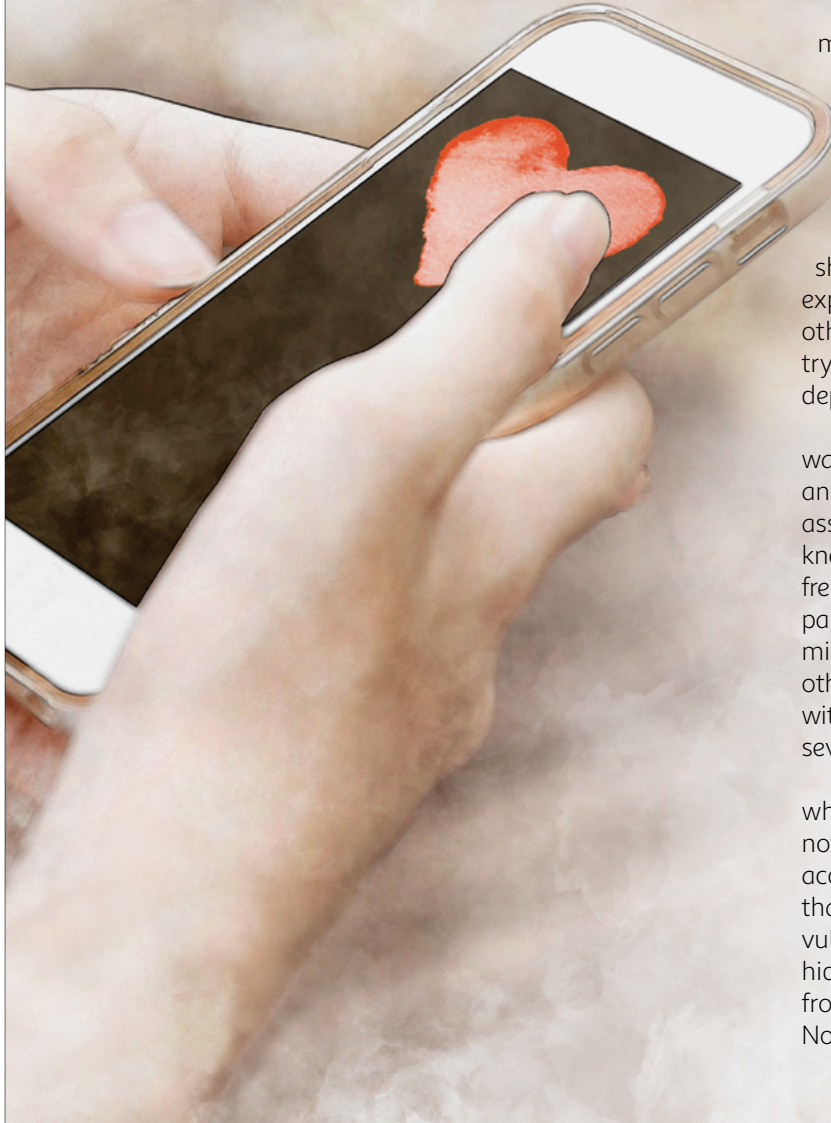
Specific personal stories from the authors’ own experience in ministry would also enhance this volume. Perhaps, even a story or two from pastors’ kids. People love a good story. The authors clearly made the decision to limit the level of personal disclosure. I respect that decision, but perhaps a second book by this obviously committed and gifted couple will open the door into that more personal space!

In conclusion, this is a book for any individual, couple, or family engaged in pastoral ministry. The open-minded reader will learn much, and any pastoral family member will be challenged to deepen their commitment to the Lord and the ministry to which He has called them. It is worth taking the time out of your schedule to read this book. 📖





Pastor, how *loved* do you feel?



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SCAN FOR AUDIO

The most meaningful text message I have ever received came from my friend Marie. After befriending Marie, I invited her to church. To my surprise, she started coming, even though she's not a Christian.

After several visits, Marie texted me to express her gratitude. One sentence in particular jumped out at me:

"I've never felt loved like this before."

I sat stunned, eyes tearing up. It made me wonder: *What if Adventist churches everywhere were known for helping people feel more loved than they ever had before?*

Then my thoughts turned to the need for God's workers to feel loved. I am convinced that in order to effectively share God's love, we need to consistently experience it—both from God and from others. I learned this lesson the hard way—trying to balance ministry with untreated depression and addiction.

I started working for the church when I was 22. I was struggling with binge eating and bulimia. I knew I needed help but assumed people would be disgusted if they knew. So, I tried to numb my shame with a frenzy of ministry activity. I experienced the painful isolation that comes from trying to minister to others without allowing God (and others) to minister to me. God blessed me with a strong and lasting recovery, involving several people I feel safe confiding in.

Because of my experience, I feel pained when I think of those in ministry who do not have the friendship, support, or loving accountability they need. Research indicates that pastors and church leaders are extra vulnerable to loneliness, burnout, and hidden shame. Consider the following results from a 2014 survey of Adventist pastors in North America

- Forty-nine percent of pastors reported struggling at times with anxiety or depression.
- Two-thirds of pastors felt they didn't have enough time to spend with family or friends.
- The majority of pastors reported stress that they did not have anyone in whom to confide.
- Over one-third of pastors reported struggling with media addiction.
- About one-third of pastors admitted struggling with pornography.
- Two-thirds of pastors reported stress about prioritizing personal devotions.¹

A 2013 survey² of 4,260 Adventist pastors in all 13 divisions revealed several stressors:

- Forty percent of pastors felt they did not have enough time to do their necessary work.
- Twenty-three percent of pastors reported occasionally wanting to leave the ministry.
- Twenty-five percent of pastors reported feeling discouraged and uncared for.

Sometimes good ministry means sharing bread with the hungry, preaching eloquently, or going the extra mile for a church member. But other times, good ministry means spending time with supportive friends, establishing healthy boundaries, or slowing down long enough to experience God's healing presence. It means reading the Bible for personal encouragement and guidance, not just sermon preparation. In moments of discouragement or failure, good ministry might mean reaching out to a friend, mentor, or counselor and saying, "Something is wrong. I need help."

Today, intentionally prioritize your own spiritual and emotional health. Set aside a few moments, ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance, and honestly reflect on the following questions:

1. What barriers are preventing me from experiencing God's love more fully? (e.g.,

overwork, inadequate time with God, addiction, shame)

2. What steps can I take to remove these barriers?
3. What barriers are separating me from the support and accountability I need from others? (e.g., shame, not wanting to be a burden, busyness)
4. What action steps can I take to get the ongoing support and accountability I need?

"The power of love was in all Christ's healing, and only by partaking of that love, through faith, can we be instruments for His work."³ May we, along with those we serve, say: "I've never felt loved like this before."

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Online recovery for pornography: gatewaytowholeness.com
Note: The Gateway to Wholeness website lists a wide variety of additional resources.
- English SDA distance counseling: abidecounseling.us
- Spanish and Portuguese SDA distance counseling: pysyson.org
- Celebrate Recovery and CR International: celebraterecovery.com
- Biblical support for LGBTQ+ challenges: comingoutministries.org
- Search online for a Christian counselor near you!



- 1 David Sedlacek et al., "Family Stressors and Strategies for Alleviation of Stressors in Pastors' Families," September 8, 2014, static1.squarespace.com/static/571690422b8ddee5df762d8e/t/5a270b93652dea92b0bc7859/1512509803573/Family+Stressors.pdf.
- 2 The Institute of Church Ministry, "The Adventist Pastor: A World Survey," May 2013, adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/The%20Adventist%20Pastor%20A%20World%20Survey%20.pdf.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 825.



Hope for Today's Families book launched in Poland

ZATONIE, POLAND

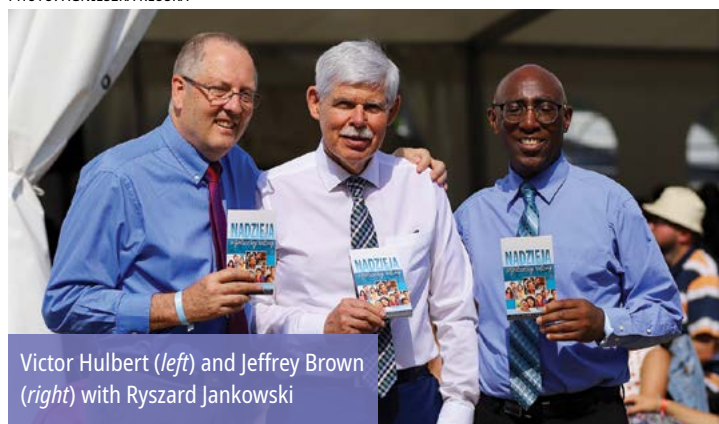
Thirty thousand copies of the 2019 missionary book of the year, *Hope for Today's Families*, will be distributed across Poland following a launch at the Polish Union Camp Meeting on Sabbath, July 20, 2019.

Ryszard Jankowski, president of the Polish Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, introduced the book to the 1,100 participants who gathered on the final Sabbath of the 10-day event, encouraging them to share the book and its message with friends and neighbors.

Victor Hulbert, Trans-European Division Communication and Publishing Ministries director and one of the speakers at the camp, shared that he was taking copies back to England because his next-door neighbors are Polish.

Jeffrey Brown, Ministerial Association associate secretary at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and nightly guest speaker for the camp meeting, expressed how delighted he was to see this book translated and in print. "I am personal friends with the authors, Willie and Elaine Oliver," he said. "I sent them a message this morning

PHOTO: AGNIESZKA KLUSKA



Victor Hulbert (left) and Jeffrey Brown (right) with Ryszard Jankowski

to tell them that their positive family message is being shared across the country and beyond."

Marek Micyk, Polish Union youth director, said that Poland has just under 6,000 Adventist Church members in a population of 38 million. While the church faces many challenges, the annual camp meeting held in Zatonie, western Poland, provides unparalleled inspiration, mission focus, and nurture for members and guests of all ages. Almost half of all baptisms across Poland happen either at this site or as a result of guests coming to visit the place.

Jarosław Dziągiewski, president of the West Polish Conference, offered a prayer of blessing on the books before they were distributed from a table outside the main tent. They join a rich collection of books that Polish Adventists have published on health and family life issues. [Victor Hulbert /Trans-European Division]

Pastors help restore families at the Mexico border

On July 24 and 25, 2019, a group of pastors and church administrators visited a center in Ciudad Juárez, México, where migrants refused entry into the United States are housed, pending asylum interviews at the border.

Northeastern Conference president **Daniel Honore** reported, "The conditions are heartbreaking. Poor housing and sanitary conditions, without medical care." He continued, "[Officers] herd two or three families in[to] two-bedroom cabins with no beds, only thin mattresses on the floor. These families cook their meals outside on improvised grills of stone and bricks. We saw children with skin and ear infections but no medication."

Honore said that according to what he saw, the migrants they visited are primarily from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

"We met an Adventist family whose dad was an ordained deacon in El Salvador. They told us about giving up everything and fleeing when gangs threatened to kidnap their daughter from her Seventh-day Adventist school unless they made regular 'protection' money payments," Honore wrote.

In addition to Honore, Southwest Region Conference president **Calvin Watkins** and 13 Seventh-day Adventist pastors from that conference delivered six carloads of hygiene and grooming supplies, for which the migrants expressed great appreciation.

"We've got to separate politics from people, especially the vulnerable and feeble," **R. Clifford Jones**, president of the Lake Region Conference, said. "We've got to see people the way God does, especially the stranger and alien. We've got to work at restoring families, especially those fleeing inhumane conditions and persecution." [Debbie Michel, *Lake Union Herald / Adventist Review*]

Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice

BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES

The 2019 Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice (ACFRP) took place July 18–20 in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, on the campus of Andrews University. The conference themed “Families Then and Now: 100 Years of Family Research and Practice,” began with the presentation of the inaugural Spalding Medallion for Lifetime Service to **John and Millie (posthumous) Youngberg** for their exceptional service in the field of family ministry.

relationships, especially to those who are hurting, in bondage, or oppressed.

Willie and Elaine Oliver, directors of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, thoughtfully reviewed the history of family ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and, in a message entitled “Hope for Today’s Families,” presented tools that pastors and family ministry leaders can use to bring healing. In the session “Adventist Family Ministries: Who? What? Where?” pastors and family ministries leaders listed the top five concerns they face in their local churches. Ministry to LGBT persons topped the list. Recognizing that family issues are often complex, defying simplistic solutions, discussion ensued

regarding our foundations being biblical and our responses being Christian, marrying strictest standards with greatest grace, highest holiness with foremost forgiveness, and perfect purity with marvelous mercy.

The GC Spalding Medallion award was presented to **Claudio and Pamela Consuegra**, directors of Family Ministries for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The NAD Family Ministries Distinguished Service Award was presented to **Buford and Carmen Griffith** for their 30 years of service as Family Ministries directors

within the North American Division.

Participants in the conference, with its 16 workshops, testified that they had been challenged. **Julius Everett**, a pastor, commented, “Now it’s time to take this information and make real changes.” All pastors and those with a passion to help singles, marrieds, parents, and children are invited to attend next year’s conference, July 23–25, 2020, at Andrews University. For more information, visit the “Adventist Conference on Family Research & Practice” page on the Andrews University website, https://www.andrews.edu/sem/reled/acfrp_conference/, or call the General Conference Family Ministries department at 301-680-6175.



Willie and Elaine Oliver present the inaugural Lifetime Service medallion to John and Millie (posthumously) Youngberg.

The Youngbergs began Family Life International in 1975, and it evolved over the years into the current Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice.

Trevor and Edith Fraser from Oakwood University, family life authors and professors of theology and social work, explored the history of families over the past 100 years through cultural and societal lenses and provided excellent strategies for processing conflicts in healthy, growth-filled ways.

David Sedlacek, professor of discipleship and family life in the seminary and his wife, **Beverly Sedlacek**, facilitated a stimulating discussion of the varied meanings of *Sabbath* as it relates to



A life infused with balance

“I moved in, but I’m not settled!” After an arduous week, I sat on the couch while in conversation with my mom. I felt the strain of moving to a new environment—new job and new churches—for the fifth time in my marriage—now with three kids. The stress of home, work, and school left me reeling.

Our family was riddled by fatigue, and we were drowning in the obligation of academics, home, and the constant absence of my spouse, who was tending to ministerial duties. While he was gone, the brunt of the domestic obligations fell on my shoulders with three tender-aged children. He questioned how he could help, but my fatigue hampered my ability to communicate those areas of needs effectively.

It took my husband and me two years after that initial conversation with my mom to find some balance in our lives. We realized we needed to make a concerted effort to evoke the change we wanted to see. It took some time, but we decided to make significant changes. We outlined a grid of responsibilities and routines for each member of the family. From the first day the schedule was implemented, a peace ensued and enveloped our minds. The children felt openly included, and their sense of direction for each day was concrete in their minds. My husband and I felt re-centered as well. We worshiped, cooked, and played together. We also filled in gaps with the children when Dad was absent, tending to pastoral duties, and vice versa for myself when I was absent.

The thought of balance

Now, as I contemplate what our past looked like versus our present situation, I can recall the words one minister shared with us early in our ministry: “Marriage is the sum of unequal parts. Some days it’s sixty-forty, other days it’s seventy-thirty.”

Can a marriage survive with partners not equally contributing 100 percent? Could it be that even though both partners are committed,

they may not always be at their best for various reasons (e.g., illness, accidents, schoolwork, or additional work-related projects)?

The concept of balance is of even greater concern for ministerial families! The pastor’s job has been branded as a 24-7 engagement of meeting other people’s needs. I submit that every individual must have boundaries to preserve the essence of who they are in order to nourish their relationships and health. Relentlessly immersing self in work for the “cause of Christ” is detrimental in the long run. Even Jesus rested and took time to pray and nourish His relationship with His Father and the disciples. Why should mere mortals seek to do otherwise?

Pastoral ministry will have no respect for family care and ministry unless we infuse that balance into it. It is common knowledge that human beings have a longing for balance in their lives. What it looks like for each person is not inherently the same, but it is important that we find what keeps us calm, cool, and collected. Thus, when ministers and their spouses agree to set clear open boundaries about where work and home begin and finish, bountiful health blessings await them in the end!

Subscribing to the cliché that ministry is a 24/7 job, without a plan, opens the door for familial heartbreak and psychological scars for husbands, wives, and their children (if they are blessed to have any). And yes, the pastor’s job mirrors an on-call protocol; therefore, a plan on how to respond to the unexpected events is important. Both spouses should know the response before the call comes. Thus, when the mathematical scale is tipped, the spouse understands how to compensate for the unequal parts. Vice versa in the daily home life, clear delineations of each spouse’s role are vital to maintaining balance. I would assert here that an understanding of what it takes to fulfill your spouse’s role is also equally important—just in case life unexpectedly tips the scale in your home—which, in fact, it will. 🍷

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ACTS 4:31, NLT

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